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# THE HAVOC OF A SMILE

BY

L. B. WALFORD.

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THE HAVOC OF A SMILE



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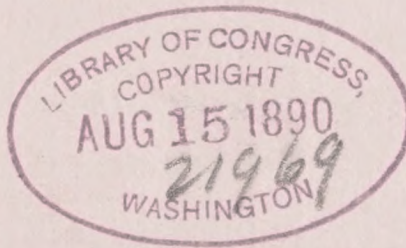
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# THE HAVOC OF A SMILE

✓ BY  
L. B. WALFORD

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*AUTHORIZED EDITION*  
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NEW YORK:  
JOHN W. LOVELL COMPANY  
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*Authorized Edition*



# THE HAVOC OF A SMILE.

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## CHAPTER I.

“I AM ready to begin to-morrow,” said Gregory.

People who have never seen our great metropolis in all the early brilliance of the ‘merrie month o’ May’; have something yet to look upon in life. There is a sparkle and energy, a freshness and vigor of existence, about those first days of the London season, which is not confined to any grade or sphere. Small, narrow streets, and back alleys put forth their best, and deck themselves according to their lights, as systematically as do the noble squares and parks; the little pots upon the window-sills of mews and stable-yard are as sure a sign of galahood as are the banks of bloom in broad balcony and verandah; while over all, the glorious May sunshine impartially pours forth its beams, lightening the hearts of the aged and sorrowful, as well as causing the blood to bound in the veins of the young and happy.

It is scarcely possible to walk abroad, we will say be-



tween the hours of twelve and two, on a bright spring morning, to pass along the well-watered thoroughfares now echoing to the ceaseless roll of light equipages vying with each other in elegance,—to stroll from point to point, noting that all is new, spotless, immaculate,—and that everything which can delight the eye and tempt the fancy is spread out in window and doorway,—to turn presently into the flowering Park and Row, where beneath the bursting green of myriad buds, a glittering, rainbow-like assemblage stretches far away on either side, where horse and rider, alike faultless, move hither and thither over the cool, soft, wet earth, and where the strains of gay music from the soldiers' quarters hard by add to the pleasures of the scene,—it is, we say, not in human nature not to be exhilarated by the spectacle of life under such an aspect.

May, some will say, beautifies every place ; sunlight glorifies every object. The dullest spot on earth becomes transformed by these two influences combined.

Nay, but there is a joyous response, an electric effort on the part of humankind, when gathered together for this great tryst of the year, which scores two-thirds of its success.

It is not only that there is the gloss of a radiant atmosphere to transfigure and beguile, it is that the earth and all that thereon is, strains every nerve to



meet halfway the kindly beneficence of the heavens ; that one urges forward another, that this current meets that current ; that forces act and re-act ; that religion, statecraft, science, art, literature, commerce, are all in the race for eminence, and are no less eager to be in the front rank than are fashion, folly, and frivolity. The vast city becomes for the nonce the centre of all things. To be there is the desire of all hearts. To achieve distinction therein is the aim of ambition under every guise.

In these days it may accordingly seem strange to be told that there are actually a considerable number of young, aspiring, energetic Englishmen who have never, or hardly ever beheld their own capital at the precise moment above alluded to. We do not of course refer to yokels, nor even to country bumpkins, as to whom there would be nothing at all peculiar in the fact. We refer to youngsters of superior rank, youths whose "people" are as sure to be met with in Piccadily or Bond Street on a May morning as are any of the regular inhabitants, and who in their turn will be seen with equal certainty standing in the doorways of their clubs in St. James' and Pall Mall, by-and-by. There are many hundreds of these who will tell you that they have never yet been in Town during the early part of the season.

Gregory Pomfret never had.



No one would believe him when he first said so : his mother and sisters roundly asserted that he was talking nonsense ; while even his father cried, “ God bless my soul,” and laughed aloud.

Gregory, however, was not to be laughed out of his knowledge of the fact. He was a slow thinker who seldom made mistakes, and he knew that he was not making a mistake now.

It was perfectly true, as his mother said, that for years he had been within a couple of hours of London by rail, during the time to which he was referring,—but it was true also, that he had never taken advantage of being so. He had been at Eton, and at Oxford ; but he had on no single occasion run up to Town from either school or university, until the Easter term had come to an end. It had been well on in June before he had got away from the latter, it had been the end of July ere he had quitted the former.

Upon hearing which Mrs. Pomfret, who could never remember a date, and who had merely told her son he was talking nonsense because it seemed to her incomprehensible that *anyone* should be “ out of Town ” in May, not that Gregory should,—was quite surprised, and even, for the moment, interested.

“ You will enjoy yourself,” she prognosticated, as soon as the persistence of the only person present who



thought the matter worth persisting in, had brought at length its due reward of conviction, "you will be amused. But how odd it seems. Why, I should hardly know myself out of Berkeley Square in May ; and as for the girls, they are just as fond of the London season as I. And to think that all these years——"

"Come, come ; not so many years, neither," interposed her husband, somewhat gruffly. "You did not see much of Berkeley Square, nor yet of the London season when we lived down yonder in Bloomsbury. Gregory was quite right not to waste his time and his money rattling up to London, when he knew it was stiff work for me to pay his schools bills as it was,—why, bless my soul ! the boy is only twenty years old now ; would you have him *blasé* already ? I daresay when he got off for a day, or half a day, he went for a row, or a ride, eh, Greg ? A thousand times more sensible that, than fooling about London. Nothing to interest any boy——"

"Oh, I say, sir !" Gregory looked remonstrances.

"I say nothing to interest any healthy-minded boy," reiterated Mr. Pomfret, with emphasis, "nothing rational, nor—nor—nor manly. Nothing but petticoats," in accents of disgust.

"Yet you have brought me to the petticoats after all, sir."



“ I have brought you to your *work*, sir,” the elder speaker frowned. “ Had the work not needed you, I should have let you stop on at the university till your three years were out,—but you know how it is. I am not fit to go on, as I have been going; if I attempted it, I might fall down dead any day—”

“ My dear !” It was Mrs. Pomfret who here interposed.

“ Aye, my dear ; but it’s true,” persisted her husband, though more composedly. “ Clark says so—or at least if he did not absolutely say the words, he inferred them. ‘ Have you a son who could take your place ?’ he inquired ; and when I mentioned Gregory, he said at once ‘ then send for him.’ I daresay Gregory thinks it hard to be taken away from his easy life——”

“ That’s not fair.”

Perhaps there was some excuse to be made for the blunt interruption. Gregory had obeyed his father’s summons on the instant,—to confess the whole truth, he had not even obeyed unwillingly ; since a junior partnership in a fine old firm, and a taste of London life with the bloom on, was not to be despised by any one, and had in fact a distinct allurements for our young Oxonian,—wherefore he was conscious of having upon no score merited the querulous insinua-



tion which took for granted reluctance and complaint.

“ I never said I was sorry to come,” he now added flushing up.

“ If you did not *say* so——”

“ I did not even feel so, I—Oxford is not all beans,” blurted out the young fellow, frankly. “ It was all very well for a time, but I have had about enough of it. It is beastly narrow. You don’t know what to do with yourself——”

“ Bless my soul ! ” ejaculated Mr. Pomfret for the third time. “ Not know what to do with yourself ? ” he demanded in amazement. “ Why, what on earth do you want to do with yourself ? You are not cut out for study, you tell me. All right. I am no great hand at study myself. But can’t you ride—or row—or play cricket, and football—or—or—do what other young fellows do ? Can’t you go in for those sort of things, eh ? ”

“ I am not very good at them, father.”

“ Not at any of them ? ”

“ No ; not at any of them.”

“ Humph ! ” said Mr. Pomfret.

“ I don’t say that I cannot just play cricket, and I suppose I can take an oar, and go along on a horse,” pursued Gregory, after a minute’s pause, during which he had been under scrutiny, and had been con-



scious of being so, "but I don't do any of these things *well*, and it is no use pretending that I do."

"I thought all boys of your age were cricketers, and the rest of it. Whenever I speak to any of my friends, they begin about the big 'runs' of one son, or the 'splendid victories' of another,—what—what are you smiling at?" demanded Mr. Pomfret, sharply.

"Because I could gammon you about big runs and splendid victories if you choose, father, but I fancied you would like the truth best. The half you hear is rot. A few do go in for these sort of things, and a few more do it because the others do it, but the most of us——" Gregory paused.

"Well?" cried his father. Well?"

"Do nothing," concluded Gregory, blandly. "We don't really. We like doing nothing, and we hate doing anything. The days fool away somehow. I think perhaps I am as well up here, you know," and he shot a confidential glance.

"Not if you are going to let the days 'fool away somehow,' my young man. Business is business, and you have got to stick to it, Master Gregory Pomfret. You will have to work——"

"Oh, but I mean to work, sir."

"You do? I hope so," significantly.

"I do, really. I like the thought of it. I want



to be at something, if I only knew what. And—and—I shall be glad to be a help to you, father.” The two were alone, the mother and sisters having slipped away from the room, as soon as it became apparent that chit-chat was not to be the order of the day. There was something in the tone of the last words, which made the elder speaker gulp down unspoken the beginning of another sentence.

“If I am to be of any use to you now, and to take your place presently—that is, when you wish to give up working, and—and enjoy yourself,—” proceeded Gregory, to whom his precise position in the firm had been definitely explained from the outset, “the sooner I get into training the better. I see no good to be got by losing a day.” (His mother had suggested a weak’s breathing space). “I am ready to begin to-morrow,” said Gregory, rising to his feet as he spoke, and looking full in his father’s face.

The gaze was steadily returned. For a whole minute neither uttered another word. Then, “By G——! he’s got it in him!” suddenly exclaimed Mr. Pomfret, with a rush of emotion akin to nothing his breast had ever known before. “By—by G——! the boy has got the real thing in him!”



## CHAPTER II.

## THE BEGINNING.

FROM that day forth Gregory's father began to conceive a respect for his son.

Hitherto, it must be confessed, he had scarcely done this; indeed he had owned to his inner consciousness,—not indeed that he had been exactly disappointed and chagrined—that would have been too much to expect,—but that he had been surprised by that portion of himself which was vested in his heir. It had seemed to him that the investment had hardly turned out as he might have expected it would. A quiet, simple, unobtrusive boy ought not to have sprung from such a majestic, full-voiced, loud-toned, awe-inspiring, paternal source.

Neither at school nor at college had Gregory been the big, swaggering, rich man's son. He had slipped modestly along towards manhood, instead of dashing at it full-tilt, as his father would have had him do.

Neither had he obtained scholarly renown. In-



stead, he had done simply nothing, and had liked doing nothing.

Then had come the recall home.

Then the crisis; and finally, the immense astonishment and unutterable revolution of all former ideas concerning the lad, which had found vent in the exclamation wherewith we closed the last chapter.

Nor was Mr. Pomfret less well-satisfied, as time went by. For the first week or two after the start had been made, indeed, he was inclined to be restless and anxious: it could be seen that he was watching everything and everybody; but as no evil symptoms of any kind made their appearance, as there was neither blundering nor stupidity on the part of the young partner nor fault-finding on that of his seniors, the lines upon the parent's brow one by one relaxed, his step grew more and more cheerful, and his tone more confident; until at length, it was patent to all that the Rubicon, as regarded Gregory Pomfret, had been successfully passed, and that in the opinion of one and all, he was going to "do."

We have now done with Gregory in the light of a business man. Let it be understood that he took to his new life heartily, and was by no means disposed to be a cypher in the niche which he so obviously fitted, and we will turn to the other side of the picture, that side with which alone we shall in future have occasion



to concern ourselves, namely, the life of our young workman in his own home.

How did he fare there? How did it suit him, and how did he suit it? We shall see.

It was not exactly an idle home. Perhaps Mrs. Pomfret and her daughters worked, in their own way, as hard as Gregory did in his,—but their aims were different. These aims had always been understood to be different. From early years, indeed from the very beginning of her married life, Mr. Pomfret's wife had taken it for granted that she and her husband had two distinct missions to perform: he was to provide money, she to spend it,—and to do her justice, she faithfully carried out her part of the bargain.

She had been humbly born; she had married a rich man; she now aspired to being a woman of fashion. Let this description suffice.

Nor do Gregory's sisters deserve a more minute one at our hands. They were lively, volatile, and pleasure-loving: their one idea was society; and they held that every other consideration should give way where it was concerned.

As a boy, Greg had been fond of his sisters, who had petted and pampered him, the youngest of the family, and the only son and brother of the house. They had told each other that the little fellow was presentable in appearance, that his manners were



gentle and winning, and that his Eton jacket and large white collar looked well on the back seat of the carriage.

Furthermore, Greg, who was by nature reserved and silent, had proved an excellent listener to the two chattering girls. He would sit on a stool, turning his head from one to the other as they talked, with a solemn attention which was vastly agreeable, as well as proper at his years. And, to conclude, it was convenient to have a third person to take up and be friends with, when, as not unfrequently happened, Miss Winifred fell out with Miss Caroline, and the two chose not to be "on terms" with each other, as they phrased it, for the remainder of the day.

Now little Gregory did not know what this mysterious being "on terms" meant,—or, we should rather say, he did not know what it felt like. He was shrewd enough to perceive that every now and then there would be an ominous silence round the dinner table, or that one or another of the females present, would toss her head and flounce out of the room if certain subjects were alluded to, or inquired into—but he would simply wonder in his quiet soul what good the toss or the flounce did, and steal out of sight till the atmosphere was serene once more.

That was what Greg was as a boy.

As a young man he naturally developed. He



would now and again argue a point, or dispute an axiom. He took a little more part in general conversation, and he did not shun visitors. Finally, he had arrived at the stage of being able to stand up for himself, and to cry out that a certain accusation was "Not fair?" at the time we first beheld him.

To sum up, Gregory Pomfret was one of those very quiet people who have an immense fund of reserve force, a considerable share of innate refinement, and an obstinacy which, once roused, no human power could avail against.

The vulgar clatter of the noisy, assumptious family circle, forever excited and eager about trifles, forever discussing the attainable, or lamenting the unattainable, fell upon the ears of one person of the house, only as the sound of a distant torrent, whose uproar has ceased to be heard by reason of its continuity, and which can only command even the attention of annoyance, by an unusual outburst.

Gregory had, you see, been acclimatized to it from infancy. He supposed that all women talked so, and acted so. He supposed that his mother was like other men's mothers, and his sisters like other men's sisters.

Wynn timer and Linny had been rather particularly friendly during his latter terms at Oxford. They had reckoned on Gregory as an escort for riding



parties and boating parties. He had been asked to bring his friends, and his friends had been civilly treated. Mrs. Pomfret had been hospitable, the Misses Pomfret amicable, and Mr. Pomfret out of the way.

That was all that had ever been expected of Gregory's papa on the social stage. It will accordingly readily be understood, that the family life into which our young Oxonian, was inducted—being as a matter-of-fact the only family life about which he knew anything (for he had but few relations or friends, and had never cared about paying visits), was presumed by him to be a natural and reasonable one. He supposed that his people were like other people. He took it for granted that they led the ordinary existence of ordinary families, and if in his heart he sometimes sighed for something different, he gave no outward sign of doing so.

He came and went. Every morning saw him start punctually, every evening as punctually saw him return.

Furnished with pass-key, he would let himself in, through the massive doorway, would put down his hat and stick, and look into room after room.

Why did he thus look? I cannot but think that if the women who were either out, driving about from tea-table to tea table, or who were bedecking them-



selves in an upper apartment had seen that wistful look round, they would sometimes have contrived to let one or other of them be there to meet it.

They never did. Gradually Gregory learned not to expect they would.



### CHAPTER III.

#### MARK LANE AND BERKELEY SQUARE.

“WELL, my boy, how are you getting on?”

“Oh, first-rate,” said Gregory.

That was his one answer: he could never think of anything else to say.

“Like your work, eh?” the father would proceed.

“Oh, first-rate,” the son would again reply.

Now and then, however, he would open his mouth, as if to add a little more, and Mr. Pomfret would have listened had he done so; nay, he would have been glad to listen, understanding more of the routine which went on within the walls of the building in Mark Lane than of the fevered existence pursued in Berkeley Square, but this was not to be permitted. Gregory had never wished to talk in the general circle, why should he begin to wish to talk now? He had never, the girls protested, cared to tell them, or any one, about his Eton days, or his Oxford days, about things and people which would



have been really of interest ; and it was ridiculous to suppose that now, now when he was down all day long in a musty old counting-house, he could have anything to talk about.

No, no ; let him forget Mark Lane and all it contained, as soon as he recrossed the threshold of his home, and let them have the ear of the house ; let Wynn timer tell her tale of the charity concert at which the duchess had been so ingratiating, and Linny hers of the fancy bazaar, which had brought her into contact with the lady of yet higher degree ; let their mother ponder and cogitate aloud upon her chances of obtaining this social distinction, and escaping that social contamination, but let Gregory be silent as he had ever been.

As for their father, however swelling might be his shirt-front and rolling his periods when in Mark Lane, he had long learned to know his place in Berkeley Square ; and it was indeed a proof of his spirit having been strangely stirred within him, that he had asserted himself for once as he had done, on the occasion when the arrival of his son, and the alteration in his own mode of life, had made some sort of formal declaration of the situation necessary in his eyes.

After a while Gregory tacitly accepted a like position in the home circle, neither protesting outwardly,



nor rebelling in his heart. As we have said, he knew no better.

It did not dawn upon him that it was hard to sit down alone, day after day, to his morning coffee, and his ill-served breakfast. He did not even grumble about the latter's being ill-served. He had a wonderful patience at this period of his life.

Not all the inattention of a lax, disorderly household, over whom there was no proper head, and who were forever brawling and rioting among themselves, provoked the person who suffered from it the most, to remonstrance or rebuke. He had an intense dislike to meddling with anybody—especially servants. He was shy of them, and shrank from them. If things were wrong, if his clothes were not properly kept, or his comforts neglected, he simply endured; one could not even be certain whether he observed.

But such philosophy hardly answers in this slipshod world.

There are, it is to be feared, few who will go about their daily duties without being the better for a touch of the spur, or a hand upon the rein.

Had the young man stormed and sworn, had he merely rung an occasional bell, or instituted a polite inquiry, matters had been different; as it was, he was so little accounted of, that—but let us discover all about it for ourselves.



It was a warm still evening in June, very nearly two months after the commencement of the new era in Gregory's life.

He had had something of a worrying day, perhaps the first really worrying day he had gone through in Mark Lane. Things had gone cross, and he had himself been conscious of inefficiency and forgetfulness. He had felt stupid and languid. As a matter of fact the change from a breezy, easy, out-of-door existence to an active and yet to a certain extent sedentary, one, was beginning to tell upon him.

Moreover, he was lonely. He missed the companionship of innumerable other joyous young idlers; the interchange of news and chit-chat; the long talks and smokes with which the summer days had been wont to close with him, hitherto.

The other youngsters of his age in the counting house were not his equals. He had hoped that at least one or two of them might be so, but as it happened, there was not a single clerk in the house with whom he could, even at a pinch, care to consort. It was this which, more than anything else, had erst led Gregory to search the empty rooms so eagerly on his nightly return home; it was the entire absence of sympathetic intercourse with any living soul,—and that just at a time when sympathetic intercourse was most needed,—which had at length



aroused desires and affections previously dormant. So long as he had had friends in plenty, he had not needed, and perhaps to confess the whole truth, had not particularly cared about motherly and sisterly companionship ; but, all else having failed, he felt—he did not know how he felt.

It was a new thing to be so listless and passionless. He seemed to care about nothing, to know about nothing. He had no part nor lot in any of the affairs of the day. If, by chance, allusions to them were made in his presence, he had no idea of what was meant. He never saw anybody before he left the house in the morning ; he only encountered them on the stairs, or waiting for the carriage in the boudoir, on his return home.

Now and again his mother would have a dinner-party, on which occasion he would be enjoined to be dressed and down by eight o'clock ; and, not knowing any one who was expected, and feeling miserably certain that he should never have the courage to enter the great saloon after the guests had assembled therein, he would have half an hour of unutterable agony, getting into his now seldom used dress clothes, and tying his unaccustomed tie, lest he should be unable to get down before the people had begun to come.

That formidable barrier surmounted, however,



Gregory would rather enjoy the dinner-party. It was a change from his solitary meal in the library, and his book afterwards. It was certainly preferable to be seated at a gayly set out table, sparkling with silver and glass, sweet with flowers, talking to a nice girl—he usually thought his partner a nice girl—and partaking of good things with a better appetite than he could ever muster for a tepid cutlet or fricassee—it was decidedly better to be doing this, than to be doing as he now nearly always did, at that hour, namely dining alone and dining badly.

It may be asked, how it was that the young man did not accompany the rest of the family to their nightly festivities? He was but seldom asked to do so. People did not know about him, and Mrs. Pomfret was not anxious that they should know. She had been vexed by Gregory's recall from the university, and vexed for two reasons. Firstly because the words "My son at Oxford" had always been a choice phrase in her mouth; and, secondly, because to have had to substitute, "My son in Mark Lane" was impossible. One of the aims of her life was to drop Mark Lane; and although she could not exactly drop Mr. Pomfret also, she could detach him.

It was to be supposed that no one, outside the immediate Pomfret circle, had the slightest idea



how the Pomfret money was come by, or that if they had, at all events it was presumed to have travelled by a circuitous route, and in days gone by.

Gregory's mother was thus, we see, a stupid as well as vulgar woman.

But poor Gregory never knew why it was that his name was so seldom written upon the cards of invitation which now began to flock in; never had the least suspicion that he would assuredly have been asked to this or that pleasant gathering, if the giver thereof had been in any degree aware of his existence.

"Yes, yes; he is best out of it all;" even his father would agree, when it was casually suggested that it would be of no use obtaining for the son or brother a more than usually tempting invitation; "let him stick to his work—stick to his work," he would proceed, shaking his head shrewdly. "Whatever you do, don't unsettle the boy. Do what you like yourselves, but leave Greg to me and the counting house. He'll be the better for it by and by—the whole of you will be the better for it. If he were fooling away his time now"—and here the speaker would proceed to give such very cogent reasons why the time should not be fooled away, even by an occasional dance or dinner, that the three females would be quite easy in their minds upon the



point; cogitating that, as Greg would certainly be no good to *them*, and as their father thought society would do no good to *him*, it was but logical to conclude that he had neither turn nor inclination for it.

“He is not half so good-looking as he was, either,” summed up the elder sister, Wynn timer, upon the June evening above referred to. “He has lost his color so.”

“And he *will* forget to have his hair cut,” interposed her sister. “Why cannot he have his hair cut, and—and be properly shaved, like other boys of his age? I told him just now that he was quite an object.”

“Just now? Is Greg come in then?” inquired their mother. “He has not been here.” The party were assembled in the drawing-room before dinner. For a wonder it chanced that they were none of them going out that evening.

“He was making straight for the library,” said Linny, laughing, “Greg makes for his burrow as if he were a rabbit. I told him we were here to-night, and he actually stared at me. What a funny boy he is!”

“To be sure we hardly ever are at home,” rejoined her sister, with some complacency.

“In the season it is not to be expected. And I



dare say Gregory likes as well as not to be quiet when he comes home tired. He will hardly thank us for interrupting him to-night." And one and all laughed as if something witty had been said.



## CHAPTER IV.

“OH, YOU FUNNY BOY!”

WHEN Gregory came down, they laughed the louder.

He had been a long time in coming, and an impatient message had been dispatched to hurry him, after the soup had been taken away, and the fish helped round. Why in the world could not the boy be quick, and sit down with them for once comfortably? Mrs. Pomfret had somewhat fretfully queried.

She was out of humor that evening. It was not so often that they could all sit down at once, that Gregory, of all people, should be the defaulter, she now exclaimed. One might have thought he would have been glad to have some company—perhaps a faint spark of maternal compunction had prevented her being diverted by the notion of her son’s finding a family party an interruption—and she was proceeding to wonder and complain, when the door quietly opened, and as quietly Gregory walked to his seat.

He was in full evening dress.



It had never occurred to him to be in anything else.

“Oh, you funny boy!”

It was Miss Linny who shrieked aloud her favorite exclamation. “Oh, dear—oh, dear! Why you have gone and *dressed*! Who in the world are you dressed for, boy? Who did you think we had got here?” cried she, and a little mocking chorus ran round the table.

“So this is what has kept you late, sir?” added Mr. Pomfret, with something of a surly intonation, for, conscious of presenting a slovenly appearance himself, he experienced a twinge of irritation at having it shown up in the light of a contrast. “You might have spared the trouble. We are all alone, and we are half through dinner.”

“I knew we were alone,” said Gregory, “but—” and he looked from one feminine face to another, “but I thought I ought to dress. I—you——” then he began to stammer a little, “don’t you usually do it?” he concluded, beginning to feel his cheeks burn.

It had seemed to him such an event that parents and sisters should be there gathered together, that the evening meal should be served in the large dining-room, and that all three men servants should be in attendance, that he had never dreamed of slouching in as his father had done, in an old coat



and thick boots, but had changed scrupulously every article of clothing worn throughout the day, and had vigorously brushed down his thick, rebellious hair before the looking-glass, so that the disdainful Caroline should not need to tell him he was "an object" a second time.

He now felt like a fool, and fancied the very footman must be thinking him one.

He was at that self-conscious age, when if one is to be self-conscious at all, the disorder is taken malignantly. Nearly all young people have a certain experience of it during the teens; are apt to imagine that everything they say and do is the subject of comment; fancy themselves aimed at covertly in conversation; see personal allusions in general discussions; are afraid of this and afraid of that; dare not for their very lives deviate from the beaten track; are in bondage to custom; and dread above everything else in the world, a laugh.

In all of this there is usually a good deal of conceit.

But Gregory Pomfret's self-consciousness had in it not one iota of conceit.

Moreover, it was not indigenous to the soil. He had not been a shame-faced little boy; he had been happy and at home with everybody, provided he were only permitted to remain in the background;



and, as he was usually thus permitted, all had gone well in his childhood.

It was only now, only within the last few months that a new uneasiness and self-distrust had crept into the young man's breast. He had wondered a little—a very little—why none of the others of his family ever asked him to accompany them hither and thither as he had been wont to be asked. Some hours of each day he certainly had at his own disposal, and those hours he—well, yes, he owned to himself he would have liked fairly well to pass either in company, at home or abroad.

But his father was now invariably at his club, if not conveyed elsewhere, in the evenings,—Mr. Pomfret had developed into a great club man since his son's advent and his doctor's orders had enabled him to take things easy in the city with a clear conscience,—and we already know how the ladies of the family amused themselves at the close of the day.

They were driving, dancing, attending operas, theatres, concerts,—everything in short, that was fashionable, and within their reach.

Gregory had begun by going to the play nightly himself.

But plays taken *faute-de-mieux* are apt to pall. With the feeling that one has to go to them because



there is nowhere else to go, and nothing else to do, they lose their flavor. It said something for Gregory Pomfret that he began to leave off theatre-going as soon as he began to leave off taking an interest in what went on upon the stage. He did not care to go behind it.

He took to riding instead, and the exchange was a good one. But solitary riding soon becomes as solitary as everything else. By degrees a dull sky, or, a little extra sensation of weariness in his limbs, was excuse enough for not ordering his horse.

Thenceforward he had begun that habit of spending the hours between dinner and bedtime, in devouring a novel by Dumas, or Victor Hugo, which had finally superseded all other ways of passing the time.

With only here and there a break, Gregory had undergone, as we have said, very nearly two months of this curious isolated existence, on the evening when for the first time that summer all the members of the family dined and spent a whole evening alone at home.

During this period the boy had been running down both in spirit and in flesh.

Had there been any kindly soul at hand to take note of such a thing, any motherly housekeeper or nurse, looking on with watchful eyes, it would have been said that Mr. Gregory "moped,"—but no one



in the Berkeley Square establishment cared whether anybody moped or not. A family bent on pleasure rarely has its valued retainers, or faithful adherents,—and Mrs. Pomfret scarcely knew whether the faces whom she met by chance on landing or staircase, belonged to her own household or not.

So Gregory's unfinished plates had been cleared away after his cheerless meals, uncommented upon.

He had grown thin, and had lost color, as Wynnie said. Neither she nor any of the others present, thought of the observation, as having about it anything suggestive. For them it simply meant that their brother's probable inability to be present at a projected afternoon crush for which they were about to issue cards, was not a matter of importance—not worth combating. He would come in for the end of the affair, would hear a few of the recitations, and get some strawberries, if there were any left:—but his loss as a smart young man, helping to do the honors of the house, would not be felt. Nothing would ever turn Gregory into a smart young man.

It must have been something of this conviction which had gradually put into the tone or look of each sister a certain contempt, when addressing their brother,—and this contempt had penetrated even his simplicity.

We now see why he had grown self-conscious, self-



distrustful, anxious to please, and insecure about pleasing, when in their society. He had always looked up to them; he now perceived what he had never done before, that they looked down upon him.

No wonder, then, that the color mounted to his brow when he found himself the subject of family ridicule, on the evening in question.

He had made his little effort. He had run upstairs and dressed as quickly as possible, rather eager, if the truth were told, to show how quickly he could dress, and how well he could look, when properly turned out; and never doubting that everyone else had been similarly engaged, had been somewhat taken back on finding himself so late, to begin with.

But, disturbance on this point was nothing compared with the confusion of perceiving, immediately after taking his seat, that no one else had changed their attire in any way; and the senseless laugh and interrogation which followed filled up the measure of his discomfiture.

It was of course only a very foolish fellow who could have minded such a thing. Anyone with a ready wit and tongue could have so turned the tables on one and all the gibbers, that it would have been their turn to blush—but Gregory Pomfret had nothing ready about him, and he had never known so miserable a moment in his life.



## CHAPTER V.

## GREGORY PUTS A FEW AWKWARD QUESTIONS.

“YOU may put on your dress-clothes to-night, my dear boy,” said Linny with a patronizing air, a few days after this. “Beatrice Andover is coming to-night; and we—that is some of us—dine at home. Papa is out, and Wynn timer is going to stay where she is—at the Feltons—till late; but mamma, and you and I are to be at home for Beatrice.”

“Oh, bother Beatrice!” said Gregory, gruffly.

Even a worm will turn at last, and he had just got to a thrilling crisis in the “Three Musketeers,” and was by this time so deadened down as it were, to the level of his dinner on a hot plate, and his easy-chair in the bow-window afterwards, that he really had begun to dislike an interruption of the routine, as Caroline had satirically asserted.

Moreover, the family at-home, which had been his last interruption, had not been a successful affair. First had been the sport of which he had himself furnished the jest, and next had followed some rather



spiteful and ill-natured cross-questioning on the part of his father, who, like his mother, had been out of humor, for the nonce; while eventually the whole community had squabbled and wrangled over the invitation list produced in view of the projected afternoon tea, and nothing else had been talked about for the remainder of the evening.

Gregory had retired to rest, angry and disillusioned.

"I had rather be alone than this," he had muttered. "If this is to be always the way when they are at home I only hope they will go on dining out, that's all."

On Linny's present announcement, he retained sufficient sense of a past disagreeable to mutter audibly, "Oh, bother Beatrice!" as we have seen.

"Well, I must say," retorted she, bridling, "it is not much good trying to do anything for you. Here, I told mamma that I would stay at home, and made her stay too—though I was dying to go to those theatricals at the barracks—"

"Why didn't you go? I never asked you to stay."

"As Beatrice was coming——"

"You stayed for Beatrice, not for me. Why do you try to make out you stayed to please me? How does your staying 'do anything' for me, as you call it?"

"Why—why—what do you mean?" But Caro-



line was slightly out of countenance nevertheless. "I supposed you would be pleased," she concluded, lamely, and a passing emotion made her infuse a little shade of reproach into the words.

(I did really think about him," she told herself, "and he might as well have been grateful.") But she knew in her heart how little he had to be grateful for.

His next words were somewhat surprising.

"Is it only you?" he demanded, after a pause.

"Only I? Oh, you mean are the rest out? No, mamma is at home; but to tell the truth, she—she is not very well, and thinks she will dine in her own dressing-room—" a little reluctantly, "and so——"

"And so there was no one *but* you, and you *had* to stay," said Gregory, looking hard at her. "You could not let Beatrice Andover come, and find nobody to receive her but me. Oh, I see, well enough." But then he began to smile. "All right, Linny. I'll be on the square with you, but you might as well have been on the square with me, don't you see? I like Beatrice Andover well enough,—what I can remember of her at least. She was a nice little girl, and if it is only her, and you, and me——"

"Well, it is only her, and you, and me."

"We shall do all right. But I have got out of the way of other people. The last night you were all



at home——” and his brow clouded significantly.

“My dear Greg, it does not do for us to be all at home. We have ‘got out of the way of it’ also. We hate it. We are always cross and disagreeable to each other. Papa is as surly as a bear, and mamma as peevish in her way. You see we are not family people. We don’t go in for that kind of thing. As soon as the season is over, Wynn timer and I each fly off among our own friends ; and we go back and forward, all the autumn and winter,—if one is with mamma, the other is with papa—papa and mamma don’t hang together either, as you will find out,—and you yourself have been so little at home till now——”

“I always came home for the ‘Long.’”

“And always found us all on the gad-about, as you must remember.”

“I suppose I do remember. You were generally abroad. And at Christmas and Easter you were at watering-places.”

“Yes, in hotels very often.”

“But Linny, does everybody—do all the other people you know, go on in the same way, when they are at home, and all together? One reads about ‘home evenings,’ and ‘family parties,’ and——” he stopped and looked in her face for his answer.

“La ! there are people and people, you silly boy,” returned she, lightly. “I don’t pry into the secrets



of other households, I only know about our own. Of course one sometimes comes across a domestic lot," she added, laughing. "I did last winter, and heaven preserve me from being cast upon that barren shore a second time. We had music and reading aloud in the evenings! we brought our needle-work down, and sat round, all in a circle like good little girls, solemnly stitching,—it was ghastly. Paterfamilias read aloud, and if there was one thing more truly awful than Paterfamilias' reading aloud, it was his commenting on what he had read. He used to lay the book down on his knee, and comment. Good heavens! Gregory, when that commenting began, I used to wish myself either in the cold grave without, or in my warm bed upstairs. I would cheerfully have stepped into either to avoid those words of wisdom."

"I should have hated it too," assented Gregory. "I hate being read aloud to. It takes such a beastly time," he added, thinking of the doings of "Miladi" in the "Three Musketeers." Just when you are at the best bit of the book——"

"Oh well, best bit or worst bit, I detest it all," cried his sister. "I never was a reader, and to have reading forced down your throat, and not to be able to get away from it, is really more than my philosophy can endure. 'No, thank you,' I shall say, next time I am invited to that house. 'First catch your hare,' as



the old cookery book has it ; first catch me, and then you may read to me."

"But there must be other things than that which people can do," urged Gregory, who as we have shown had great powers of persistence. "Aren't there?"

"Things? What do you mean? You must know as well as I. Why do you ask me?"

"Because I don't know. Because I have never been about, and you have. I do not know how people go on in their own homes,—I daresay you won't believe me, you would not believe me when I said I had never been in London in May, but it was true all the same. I have hardly ever visited anywhere. The one or two places I went to from Oxford were not places to go by. I once went to spend Easter with a fellow I knew, when he was quite alone; his father had just died, and we were by ourselves all the time. It was nice enough ; it was a beautiful place, and all that, but it taught me nothing. Now, I want to know from you, do girls—" he paused and felt himself blush—"Hang it all!" he broke out, "are they all like you and Wynn timer?"

"Like us in what?" said Caroline demurely. "In appearance—or dress—or——"

"Oh, confound appearance and dress!"

"Really, Gregory, you do use such expressions,"

"No, I don't. I only say what other fellows say.



And I suppose you and Wynn timer only do as other girls do. But I want to know one thing," stubbornly, "Beatrice Andover, is she as fond of company, and dancing, and driving, and theatricals and polo-matches and—and all the rest of it, as you and the rest of your set are? I don't think you were always exactly as you are now, Linny." He hesitated, as though reflecting. "Do you remember that summer that you and I had together down at the old farmhouse? That summer when Wynn timer was ill? Had scarlatina, or something? How we enjoyed ourselves! How we scoured the country, and made hay of everything! You were as happy as I. And you used to talk to me then——" he stopped short.

"Well?" said she, eying him.

He made no answer.

"Silly boy, I am talking to you now; and if I talk much longer we shall both be late in dressing, and Beatrice Andover will have arrived before we are ready;" and Linny flew from the room, and tried to think that something which had made her give a little start was only a fancy; that Gregory's voice had had no break in it, when he said there had been once a time when she used to talk to him.



## CHAPTER VI.

‘BEATRICE,’ INDEED !

WHETHER it were from this cause, or from some other devoid of all such sentiment, Caroline was unable to make her toilette speedily.

One thing after another went wrong, her maid was inattentive, her things were astray, and a note which required an answer, was brought in to her when matters were at their worst.

“Is she never coming down?” muttered Gregory, who had been furtively hanging about his own open doorway for the past quarter of an hour.

He had not been quick himself, having experienced none of the bright expectations which had sent him spinning through his last ceremonious dressing, and had been afraid of being so decidedly outstripped in speed, that he had let his door stand ajar, ere he had absolutely finished, in order to hear his sister rustle past, when he had proposed to himself to hurry after her as soon as might be. But, no rustling having ensued, he had completed all his arrangements, and had then stationed himself on the watch.



What in the world could Linny be about? Could he have been mistaken about the hour?

He consulted his watch, the handsome watch with which his father had presented him as a security for punctuality in Mark Lane,—but no, it was barely yet the family dinner-hour, supposing the family could be said to have a dinner-hour—and no roll of gong had penetrated to his ears. He felt convinced that not a soul had stirred in the upper landing since he had left his own door open, and it was not like Linny to have been so supernaturally quick as to have got down ere that precaution had been taken. She was invariably the last to appear, though often the first to disappear when the mysteries of the toilet had to be performed. She was—a door opened, and Gregory turned quickly round.

“I say, Beatrice will have come——” he began, and then broke off short, blushing furiously.

It was none other than Beatrice herself who had emerged at his elbow.

“I—I—thought it was Linny,” muttered poor Greg, feeling ready to sink through the floor.

Bad as it was to be thus caught, he could have borne anything if it had not been for that word “Beatrice.”

He had never called his cousin by her name; she was not quite a first cousin, to begin with; and,



secondly, she was older than he ; and, thirdly, Miss Andover was a personage of whom the whole family stood in awe.

Beatrice was an orphan, rich, beautiful, independent ; all of which considerations however weighed as nothing when compared with this other, namely, that she moved in a superior world to that which owned the Pomfrets.

Into her world, these kinsfolk, although recognized by herself had never gained an entrance.

“What good would it do them?” Miss Andover was wont to argue with herself. “To introduce them to the smart people I know would only be to expose them to affronts ; or if not, they would only grow wilder and more determined in pursuit of gayety than they are already. Then, if I asked my real friends to take any notice of them, although out of kindness to me they might do so, they would find it impossible to keep up any appearance of being in sympathy on any sort of subject. It would all end in a break-down. So I must do what I can by myself,” she had been fain to conclude any such reflections. “I must go and stop in Berkeley Square and make the best of it ; and at any rate not be *un-cousinly* and *un-relationly*. They shall take me to their houses, if I can’t take them to mine ; and it must just happen that I have nowhere particular to go



while I am under the Pomfrets' roof. The season is pretty far through ;" she had cogitated on the present occasion, "it will be easy to give up all that is left of it ; although I do not look forward to the sojourn."

And then the fair speaker had sighed, and resigned herself to the inevitable. She had a very special reason for objecting to her visit this time.

But Mrs. Pomfret had been very specially urgent ; she had hinted that Beatrice had been here, there, and everywhere that summer, but had not so far blessed her relations in Berkeley Square with the light of her countenance ; had "felt it a little hard" that they should have seen so little of her, even when she was stopping close by in Park Lane ; and had indeed as good as complained that the young lady had neglected her own kindred because she did not consider them good enough for her.

It was the justice of this final shaft which had brought Miss Andover now to Berkeley Square.

She had been brought up to reverence the tie of blood. She did not like her vulgar, pompous cousin Robert any more than she did his wife and daughters ; their ways were not her ways, nor their thoughts her thoughts ; but all the same—and it had ended in her agreeing to spend a fortnight in their society, and sighing as she closed her note of agreement to do so,



She had never thought of Gregory at all in the matter; in fact, she scarcely knew that there was a Gregory.

He recollected of her, but she had only the slightest possible reminiscence of him. On hearing herself now called "Beatrice," she could not for the life of her have responded with "Gregory."

Indeed her first emotion was a little natural resentment. Who was this who was thus making free with her name? A tall youth—not even a boy.

"Beatrice" indeed! She was often ready to bite her lips at all the *Beatricing* which went on in Berkeley Square, where her name was never at rest, and where stranger after stranger, every one in short, who came to the house, whether mere acquaintance or old friend, was made familiar with the sound.

It was one of her special grievances when with the Pomfret cousins, that she was their figure-head for the nonce, and in this character was labelled "Beatrice."

To hear it beginning already!

She turned sharply round upon the speaker, disdain in the movement; and poor Gregory saw the disdain, and it killed the last flickering ray of spirit in him.

His lip quivered, as he stuck fast in his stammered apology: and the deep flush which had mounted to



his cheek, crept upwards and overspread his brow.

“Hum—penitent?” muttered Miss Beatrice, surprised in spite of herself. “Penitent? And so he may be. ‘Beatrice’ indeed!” But she held out her hand with a smile.

Of course, dear reader, you perceive instantly that it was that smile which began all the mischief: kindly however, have a little patience; so far we have only come to the smile; not to the havoc it wrought; nor yet to—the end of the story.

Understand, then, that it was not the fault of Miss Beatrice Andover that she possessed the most heavenly smile in the world. She had a fine nature, by no means perfect, but with such a mingling of sweetness with strength, of amiability with sincerity, as made all who came within the range of her fascination wonder what could be the feelings of a creature so divine—wherein could a woman so perfect be at fault? This, be it understood, however, was a query principally propounded by the male sex; yet there were not wanting those, too, of her own, who would wax warm in their praise; for the beautiful and prosperous Miss Andover had done many a kind deed, and said many a kind word,—only, on the whole, men liked her better than women did,—she had a certain swiftness of thought and plainness of speech which the latter found inconvenient, and she did not perhaps



flash out that magic smile upon them quite so often as she did upon the former. Certainly neither Winifred nor Caroline Pomfret had ever been favored as Gregory was now.

His blood thrilled afresh, but from a new cause. What an angel! What a radiant, dazzling star of beauty! What a——

Outwardly Gregory hung his head, and held out a sheepish hand to meet the hand held out to him.

“Dear me! What a limp touch,” thought she. “Someone should teach this boy how to shake hands. “I suppose you are one of my cousins,” she observed, aloud. “I had forgotten you were no longer at school. Aren’t you at Oxford, or something?” smiling all the time.

“I have just left Oxford. I am in Mark Lane,” murmured he, in tones rather too deep to be distinctly audible.

“In Park Lane?” Beatrice opened her eyes a little, “What?—why?—I——”

“I said in Mark Lane. That’s the city,” explained Gregory, redder than before. I—I forgot that you could not know. It’s my father’s house of business.”

“Oh yes, of course. And you work there now? And is he very well?”

And Miss Andover thought she ought now to de-



scend, and began to ripple downstairs, looking over her shoulder as she went, and showing to the young fellow on the step behind, a countenance the like of which he had never before seen.

The result was that he trod upon her train.

In reality this was her own fault; for if a young lady will wear a long, flowing train of a delicate lace-like material, and will talk as she goes downstairs to a person close behind her, and will especially entice him to take an interest in what she is saying by exhibiting a lovely face with a pair of shining eyes and a chin like that of a Greek statue, what can she expect but that a youth so entangled will blunder into a scrape somehow? Gregory, eagerly listening, anxiously pursuing, adoringly gazing, set his foot hard down upon the filmy folds, and they and he came to grief by the one luckless action.



## CHAPTER VII.

## REPARATION.

DOWN came the offender, away flew the offended fair one's *chiffons*.

A muttered "confound" rumbled in Gregory's throat, and was heard of no more; he was crimson with shame, and the violence of his feelings would have been soothed by an expletive, but a more powerful emotion choked it down.

What did it signify that he had knocked his elbow, trod upon his own foot, and all but slipped from the top of the staircase to the bottom, having been only saved from the latter catastrophe by a series of ungraceful lunges and clutches,—when he cared so much more, so infinitely more, that he had rudely torn that elegant robe, and alarmed its wearer?

Had he alarmed her? Or, worse still, had he simply annoyed her? Was she now jeering at his clumsiness in her heart, even while affecting to sympathize?

For Miss Andover, had herself stayed the down-



ward progress of the hapless delinquent, and, still holding him by the arm, was addressing herself to the task of consolation.

Poor Gregory scarcely dared to believe that he was not really in disgrace. "Girls hate that sort of thing," he told himself. "She is only humbugging."

But when at length he found the courage shyly to lift his eyes and see for himself how the land lay, he was met again by that wonderful smile, and, though he was only just able to murmur, "I am so awfully sorry," he knew that the sorrow had been robbed of its sting, and would thenceforth become nothing but a tender memory.

"Do forgive me," said Beatrice, brightly. "I know very well I ought not to wear my dresses so long; they are always tripping people up,"

"Are they?" (Intense ineffable consolation).

"They twist around tables, and curl up mats——"

"Do they?"

"And dogs and cats come and lie down on them."

"If I had lain down! But I," thought Gregory with a rueful aspect, "I have not lain down, I have trodden it to bits. "May I not fetch a pin?" he demanded suddenly, seeing that his cousin was knotting together, as well as she could, some loose ends which even his eyes could perceive would be improved by being more securely fastened.



“Do,” said Beatrice, calmly.

Her eyes laughed as she saw Gregory bound upstairs again, and heard him banging about in his little room whose door still stood open, obviously more relieved than words could express, by being permitted thus to repair his misdeed.

But she could hardly forbear laughing outright when he reappeared.

Whether he had thought that no ordinary pin would be adequate for the occasion and the honor, or whether he did not possess such an article, was not forthcoming, but the two enormous skewers which he now produced with evident complacency would have exposed him to the derision of almost any one.

Had he been a little older, had he looked a little less serious, she must have made some good-humored fun of him, for very truth's sake. Indeed her lips had already unclosed themselves to do so, when a voice within whispered “forbear.” By intuition she divined that jesting would be out of place.

“Thank you. How cleverly done!”

“I don't think they show—much, you know.” He rose from his knees, and critically surveyed his handiwork. “Of course it isn't *quite* as it was before——”(a mass of ragged ends dangled from a boldly projecting pin-point)—“but I really think



on one would see," concluded the speaker, in a tone of earnest conviction, "and here is another——"

"Please put it in," said Beatrice, without the flicker of an eyelid.

When Caroline descended to the drawing-room, which she did in about ten minutes' time from this, she found the two conversing together with all the ease of old friends. Gregory was showing off his poodle, and the poodle had its paws on Miss Andover's lap.

"Could not be any quicker—could not really, Beatrice," began the newcomer, in her heart blessing the good fortune which had turned her brother into such an unexpected ally. "All kinds of things hindered me, and then came that tiresome Mrs. Mann about my—why, what's the matter? Why mayn't I speak, Gregory?"

"You have put her off now. She will never do it, if she is not allowed to do it at once," cried Gregory, referring to the poodle. "I had just got her up to the scratch, and she would have done it in another second"—vexation in his accents.

"Done it—done what?" retorted his sister curling a lip and obviously put out by the indifference with which her entrance and apologies had been met. "Nothing very alarming, I daresay; but everybody thinks his own dog more extraordinary than anyone



else's dog. As for Pompon, I should say she is about as stupid as they make them," added she with a sense of using a term in vogue.

Gregory made no answer. He had grown to be very fond of his Pompon, during the past desolate weeks of life in Berkeley Square ; Pompon had been his only friend, if the truth were told ; Pompon's the only step to greet him on his arrival ; Pompon's companionship the only companionship which had been vouchsafed him during his lonely evenings.

He had occupied himself in trying, not, it must be owned, with any great success, to teach Pompon a few simple tricks. Pompon was not by nature a clever quadruped, and it was only within the past few days that she had shown any signs of responding to all the pains bestowed upon her.

But, on the previous evening, Pompon had been positively clever. She had wakened up to a perception of the root of the matter as regarded one feat which had for long been beyond her powers of comprehension, and Gregory had been proportionately pleased and hopeful.

It was the performance of this feat which Caroline's appearance and rodomontade had interrupted ; but, hard as this had been to bear, it was nothing to the contemptuous sneer at his favorite which had followed.



He felt a curious sensation. He did not attempt to reply.

What hurt him most was that he knew his sister would not thus have spoken had she not been well aware he would never speak back, and somehow it stung him to the quick that Linny should be so unkind.

Beatrice Andover took a single glance at his face. "Well, *I* don't think Pompon stupid, whoever does," she said in a clear voice, "and I am sure she would learn a number of very amusing tricks, if I might be allowed to help to teach her. I am so fond of dogs, and Pompon is delightful. May I? to Gregory whose hand she all but touched, as she caressed the black head which was now nestling to her knee.

Might she? He knew not what he answered.

Throughout the dinner which followed it was the same. Not all the endeavors of Caroline who, as chief talker, would fain have led the conversation into its usual channel—would have kept it to the ball-room or the tea-room, to the polite gossip of the day, as she understood such gossip, in short—could suffice to prevent her cousin from dropping such topics as soon as she perceived they had no interest for the pale, thin boy who was so continuously being reduced to sit by in silence, obviously out of it all.

Gregory, now that she looked at him, had a certain



dejectedness in his air and attitude unnatural at his age. The color had faded from his cheek, and she was sure he ought not to have the dark rims he had round his eyes. She came to the conclusion that he was not well; and further, that he was not happy. At once she was in arms on his behalf.

“He has a nice, dear face,” she told herself. “He is not particularly good-looking, not so good-looking as his sisters, but he has a thousand times more expression, more refinement. Now that I think of it, there used to be a gentle little fellow about at times, who was made a good deal of and petted; can this be he? He does not look as though he were petted now. He has a subdued voice; he is shut up immediately anyone wishes to shut him up; and even when I ask him a direct question, Linny interposes and answers for him. It is too bad. I will just see if I cannot cross a lance on behalf of the oppressed,” and a light darted into the eye of the fair champion. She was very well able to cross a lance with anyone, as she was perfectly aware, and she was not blindly partial to Caroline Pomfret.

“What a curious set of people you seem to know,” observed Miss Andover.

Linny had been herself holding up to view the peccadilloes and shortcomings of her multifarious acquaintance, had been hinting this and fearing that;



and making out generally that they were a wild, and wicked collection of folks,—so that she could hardly find fault with the word “curious”; but still——

“I—I don’t know any of them,” proceeded Beatrice, with a distinct suspicion of superciliousness in her accents, “and they do not seem very interesting.”

Had she thought over her first thrust for months beforehand, she could not have delivered it with more deadly effect.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE HAVOC BEGUN.

WHEN Gregory awoke the next morning it was with that instant perception of something new having happened with which we are all familiar. It may indeed be doubted whether a strange, shadowy sense of the same feeling had left him either waking or sleeping all through the night.

It had been a hot night.

July had now begun, and the trees in Berkeley Square had lost their freshness. Gregory had leaned out of his open window in the silent hours and gazed upon them with unseeing eyes. They had not stirred, nor rustled; and the earliest dawn had been ushered in with the same sultry haze as had closed the day before. Nevertheless a motionless figure had stood for long leaning on the ledge, feeling cooler out of bed than in, and thinking, thinking all the time.

He had so much to think about.

First of all there was the accidental encounter on the upper landing, and that unlucky "Beatrice" of his.



Of course she had heard: she must have heard. The movement of her head, the spurn of her shoulder had betrayed not merely the simple fact, but a good deal more. He had felt himself wince, and wither up; he had been conscious of wishing the time-honored wish that he had bitten his tongue out ere it had so disgraced him.

But the next moment the clouds had burst asunder, and the sun had shone out. Bertrice had smiled, and he had forgotten everything in her smile.

Slowly then he had proceeded to piece together bit by bit, all that had happened thereafter. The little scene upon the staircase, his clumsy awkwardness, her charming *insouciance*, his reparation. He could feel again the prick one of those two great dagger-like pins gave him, as his trembling fingers strove to thrust it where it had no mind to go.

If he could only get back that pin to keep forever; or a shred of the lace! or anything Beatrice had worn, and consecrated by her use!

She had worn flowers, but not a flower had dropped—although he had looked at them greedily, and had hoped against hope to the end of the evening. No he had nothing—nothing!

Ah, but he had treasure for all that! No power on earth could rob him of the store which memory held fast, and from it he drew forth scene after scene



over which he hung with all the passion of a burning first love.

Had he not had dim yearnings lately within his bosom, strange fancies regarding something better, higher, purer, than the lives of those with whom he lived? Had he not *known*—although himself he knew not that he had—that there was something above and beyond this petty routine, these miserable aims and desires, if it could but be obtained? How nobly Beatrice had lifted up her voice, how glowing had been her countenance when giving utterance to the very thoughts with which his dull heart had been laboring in vain!

He had been conscious of gazing on her, until he had durst gaze no longer, and had then lowered his head with his eyes; fearful lest anyone should mark the expression of his face.

His cousin had openly avouched the very sentiments which he had discarded with a sigh, as but phantasms of the imagination.

Beatrice had indeed spoken as she seldom spoke, for her spirit had been stirred within her.

We know that she did not love the Pomfret family; that they fretted and jarred upon her; and that it was only a sense of duty which compelled her now or ever to accept their persistently urged hospitality. She liked society, but it was the society of agreeable,



superior people ; society, in the present accepted sense of the word, gave her no pleasure ; while the toiling, the striving, the hurrying after gayety, the rattling from one crowded, seething mass of people to another, the anxiety to be seen where others were seen, to do what the rest of the world (their world) was doing, which was the pervading atmosphere of her cousin Robert's house, was in the last degree distasteful. It had always been so. From earliest infancy she had recoiled from it as being so. But, now, now she beheld the whole in deepened colors.

At first, it is true, Beatrice had been merely puzzled and perplexed. She had by instinct, put her finger, as it were, on Linny's lips, and frozen the running stream of foolish tattle, and she had similarly divined that her doing so had been a relief to Gregory. But it had not been all at once that she had discovered the real state of affairs in the household. It was not until after some remark of her own had drawn forth from him an assent so warm, so spontaneous, that it could have proceeded from nothing short of the heart's conviction, and the fluttering curtain which had half concealed and half revealed the truth, had suddenly rolled up before his eyes.

“Good Heavens !” she had cried, almost aloud, “as though frivolity and vulgarity had not been bad enough, must cruelty be added to them ?” For she



had realized, what no one else had thought of doing, himself least of all, that young Gregory was being cruelly treated in his father's house.

It was but a touch, a trifle, a trite enough remark, something about "home," let fall by haphazard, which had done it all.

"I, too, think sometimes of what a home might be!" Gregory had said with a kindling eye.

Linny had laughed noisily at them both. Laughed in the first instance with what had been meant for an airy archness, a pleasant raillery at her cousin; laughed with the well-known faint inflection of scorn at Gregory.

"Oh, you funny boy!" (How he had learned to hate that "funny boy.") "To hear you talk, and give your opinion as if you knew all about it! Isn't he *amusing*, Beatrice? So *naïve*—so deliciously *naïve* and *simple*."

"I'm afraid I don't perceive the *naïvete*," Beatrice had replied, almost sternly. She had not looked at Caroline's butt, as she spoke.

"*Don't* you? Oh, but you don't know Greg. He has all sorts of ideas; you have no idea what Greg's ideas are like; — perhaps he will tell you if you ask him; he let me in for some the other day. They *were* so amusing."

"I don't think they would be at all amusing to



me." Beatrice had longed to say something crushing, something annihilating, something which should make her charge—already she thought of Gregory as her charge—hold up his head again; but for the life of her she had not been able to think of anything more vigorous than the above.

She could, however, act; she could turn her back on Caroline, and let her laugh out her silly laugh alone, the while she selected for herself another companion; and, accordingly, she had risen and, strolling to the open window, had smiled upon Gregory as she went.

He had started forward as though he had received a summons.

She had accepted his hand across the low window-sill, and had suggested, "Let us stay out here;"—and his heart had throbbed beneath the "us."

After that, a long, long hour had ensued.

Linny, too deeply affronted to follow the deserters, had remained within the gilded saloon, and had seated herself at the piano in a far recess, affecting to be occupied by some new and fashionable ditties which required practising.

She had thus been safely disposed of; and securely free from interruption, the hitherto lonely boy—for after all, Gregory was little more than a boy—had allowed himself to be drawn out, and interrogated as



to every circumstance of his lot in a manner no one had ever cared to attempt before.

He had only wished the interrogation might go on forever. The soft syllables falling on his ears had been the sweetest music to which they had ever hearkened. His own responsive tones had not sounded gruff and shy—nay, they had seemed to catch an echo of the other's melody.

He had told all, confided all, allowed all. He had not complained of anyone, nor of anything; on the contrary, he had softened the recital so far as it could be softened,—but, even as it stood, it had shocked the womanly tenderness of his auditor.

Beatrice Andover had been born with a warm, loving heart, and an independent spirit. She believed in the dictates of the former, and fearlessly asserted them by the aid of the latter. The wronged, the oppressed, the suffering, invariably had her sympathies enlisted on their behalf; occasionally, it is true, with unreasonable vehemence, but always with sincerity. Selfishness in every shape she abhorred, and the callous indifference of the prosperous to the fate of the less happy had ever been a theme to kindle the fire within.

Something of this noble indignation had been visible upon her eloquent countenance, as she had by degrees mastered the present situation. Her eye had



flashed, her nostril dilated. She had with difficulty repressed the exclamations with which her bosom was heaving, and at parting had held her young cousin's hand with an expression of which she had been perfectly unaware.

She had owned to herself that what one person could do should be done to better his condition.

That was all, you see, she thought about. To better his condition. Alas! poor Gregory.



## CHAPTER IX.

“YOU ARE LIKE NO ONE I EVER MET BEFORE.”

WHEN he descended to his early meal, still musing over the wonders of the night before, there was the lady of his dreams down before him.

Beatrice was in her riding-habit, and quite prepared to sit up at the table and have her breakfast also.

“As soon as you told me of this little arrangement,” she began briskly. “I saw how it would exactly suit me. I delight in a morning ride. The Park is at its pleasantest when half the world is asleep, and one can get a really refreshing gallop instead of a pit-a-pat canter. I have been wondering,” and she shot an inquiring glance, “would it be possible for you ever to ride with me at this time? I mean of course for me to ride with you—to accompany you part of your way—of course, I don’t quite understand—but if I could——”

“Oh, you could,” replied Gregory, with a new



sense of wonder and joy, "of course you could, only—" and he paused, "I am afraid perhaps you would not like it. You like the Park——"

"But I am not bound hand and foot to the Park. Oh, dear me, no. Besides there are other parks than one. I am not quite sure where Mark Lane is, but surely we should have to go through St. James' or the Green Park——"

"Only for a very little part of the way," replied Gregory, with something of a dreary smile, "in fact, —well,—you see,—" hesitating, "by rights they are hardly in the way at all; but you could come along the embankment—" and he paused.

"Well, the embankment; why not the embankment?" cried Beatrice, readily. "I should enjoy the embankment of all things."

"Even that," replied he gently, "would hardly do for me. I—don't think me ungrateful—not I,—now that I think of it, I believe I ought not to,—you see it would take so much time," he said plainly at last, but with a look of disappointment which could not pass unnoticed.

Accordingly, Beatrice was not to be put off.

"Now why, my dear Gregory," quoth she, persuasively. "Why should we not just make the time? By rising a little earlier——"

"Yes?" said Gregory—"Yes."



“By breakfasting at half-past seven, instead of at half past-eight——”

“Oh, we should not need to do all that.”

“Say eight, then. Half an hour’s extra time would do it, would it not?”

“First-rate. But do you really mean it?” demanded the young man earnestly. “I am afraid, you know,—I am afraid you are thinking that I—that it is rough on me, having to go about alone, and all that. And of course it is really only what other fellows have to do,—and—and it’s nothing. We get used to it. I do hope you did not think I was complaining, Beatrice,” and he pronounced her name which she had told him to use, with a softness and hesitation that ought to have warned her to be careful.

But she imagined it proceeded only from a delicacy of feeling. “None of the others would ever have paused before my name for an instant,” she thought, “and neither does this speaker behind my back. But then we all call each other names behind backs. However, Master Gregory may as well be presented with the freedom of my small estate of three syllables, if we are to be friends;”—and accordingly she had issued the presentation.

“I am sure you were not complaining,” said she now, “but still I may be allowed to lay the flattering



unction to my soul that you being, like myself, of a sociable nature, would prefer my company to my room. There is no doubt that by-and-by when you have grown accustomed to your ways, you will make new friends, and have all sorts of good times, but just now you can spare a leisure hour or so for a cousin who is sometimes," and here, to his infinite amazement, her voice faltered and fell—"who is sometimes," she murmured, "a little lonely like yourself."

"If you put it so," cried Gregory impetuously "you know, oh, don't you know how happy you make me! What fun it will be! with a hasty relapse into a more every-day tone. "Oh, thank you, Beatrice, it will be jolly. When shall we begin? I have got a capital horse. My father has been awfully kind; and of course—but stop a bit," care again upon his brow, "how is he to get home? And how are you to get home; I can't leave you in the middle of the city, and leave you with May fly on your hands, too," and he stopped to ponder.

"Could we not have a groom?" suggested she.

"At eight? I am afraid not. This is not an orderly house. I don't know much about such things, but I am sure our servants are badly managed. They are kept up late at night, and—and the fact is I am always glad to get away from the house in the



morning. You see even this breakfast," and he looked round in disgust.

The coffee was weak, and the boiled milk burnt. A couple of greasy, warmed-up cutlets, left from the previous evening's dinner, and a cold ham of singularly uninviting appearance, comprised all the viands, irrespective of bread and butter. The whole was set out with a slovenly disregard of appearances which told of long-standing and deep-rooted neglect.

It was not Beatrice's place to say anything. Later on, she could not avoid contrasting the luxurious meal to which the family sat down—for they generally assembled at breakfast, breakfast being served at a sufficiently late hour to suit the most indolent—with Gregory's modest repast.

To him, however, she could not openly express what she felt, and accordingly reverted to the question of the ride, after following his glance round the table for a brief moment.

"It would be too early to take out a man?" she said. "Then have I been transgressing now in having my own horse brought round, though I did not need any one to go with me? I am going round the corner to join some people I know who always ride at this hour, and gave me a standing permission to go with them. They are husband and wife, and they ride together. And *he* goes off to the city,



Gregory. I don't know how he manages it, but he comes home and breakfasts—Gregory why should *we* not do the same? We too will ride and return for breakfast. We will go quite early; I shall not mind how early: it will be delightful—” her eyes sparkling.

“But how if you have been up late the night before?” said Gregory, demurely.

It was so new to him to partake in any discussion which had reference to himself, that he felt exhilarated and argumentative, and had even an enchanting sense of having by his sober representations to hold this beautiful creature back from doing something wild and foolish.

“Oh, but I am not going to be up late the night before,” rejoined she, gayly.

“*Aren't* you?” He was immensely surprised. “*Aren't* you going in for parties, and balls, and all the rest of it?”

“I have no invitations,” said Beatrice casting down her eyes.

This was not quite true, but she really meant it to be so. She had told her friends not to invite her, and they had been somewhat annoyed with her for doing so. But she had held fast to her purpose, had calmly insisted upon it that she was to be let alone; and in the end had been grudgingly given way to.



Thus she was perhaps able to say "I have no invitations" with a consciousness of adhering to the letter of the law of truth, but she was too ingenuous not to be a little ashamed of the manner in which she had evaded its spirit: and it was this which made her now cast down her violet orbs in momentary confusion.

"Oh, you won't need invitations. My mother and sisters will take *you* fast enough," replied Gregory, disconsolately. "They have always lots."

"But need I go?"

"Need you go?" That was a new way of putting the question.

"You see I have really had enough of the 'season,' said Beatrice confidingly. "I am not a great person for gayety. A little of it goes a long way with me; and by July I have usually had about as much as I can stand. *Certainly I* have this year," with emphasis.

"Why,—then—tell my mother so," rejoined her cousin, promptly. "Just tell her so slap out, and there you are. But I thought all women liked that kind of thing," he added, with a lingering doubt, of which he could not entirely rid himself.

It would be dreadful to think that she, this divine creature, was going to immolate herself upon the altar of self-sacrifice, in virtue of anything he had



said. And he was conscious of having said a good deal. Somehow it had been drawn out of him. He began to wish he had been a little less communicative.

“Do you think all women are the same?” retorted Beatrice, with the faintest possible touch of irritation in her tone. “Has it never occurred to you that there might be a woman who could dare to think for herself, and act for herself? Must we, one and all, be classed like a flock of sheep? Even if we must, one flock strays one way, and one another. I belong to another flock than the one with which you are acquainted, Gregory,” smiling, “and if you are still determined to allow of no individual tastes and preferences, at least divide us into sections. My section is not Linny’s section, for instance.”

“No, indeed.”

“Well?”

“I don’t know what to say,” said Gregory, “You are like no one I have ever met before, and—and it’s a new experience. That’s all,” and he rose from the table.

“We’ll talk it over to-night,” said Beatrice.

All through the day he looked forward to that “To-night.”



## CHAPTER X.

## MRS. POMFRET CONSULTS WITH HER DAUGHTERS.

“I MUST say it is a most ridiculous thing,” said Mrs. Pomfret, turning for sympathy to her eldest daughter with whom she was out driving. “Of course I wanted Beatrice to go with us to the Gardeners and the Rawlinsons; she had always been ready to go whenever she was here before, and had never made a difficulty about anything. I used to think she was glad to get a little amusement, for, though she seems to know so many fine people when she is away from us, somehow, directly one comes to look into it, she has wonderfully few places to go to. I expect she is not really so much run after as one would think. Of course she sets off a room; but if she looks cold and cross, people don’t like it. However, I did want to take her with us both to-night and to-morrow night, and do what I will, I can’t get her to say for certain she will go.”

“What excuse does she give?” inquired Winifred.



“None at all. Merely thinks she is going to ride with Gregory, or something of that kind.”

“To ride with Gregory! I thought she had taken to riding with Gregory in the mornings before breakfast.”

“That has been given up. It made his head ache for the day. He had never told me he had headaches, but it seems he has told Beatrice; and they have had to give up their morning expeditions in consequence.”

“It *was* a crazy thing to do.”

“Oh, there was no harm in it,” replied Mrs. Pomfret. “Numbers of people do the same; and I was glad Gregory should have the chance. I had been quite pleased with the idea. It interfered with nobody and——”

“—It prevented Beatrice from riding with Linny and me in the Row afterwards.”

“That did not matter,” said Mrs. Pomfret, shortly. She did not see any particular good to be got by Beatrice’s riding in the Row, and was just as willing that she should take a seat in her victoria as that she should accompany her cousins. Added to which some lingering spark of maternal feeling had made her not sorry that her neglected son should have the notice of his fair cousin, and be the better for it, if he could be so to the detriment of no one else.



“But what I do object to is Beatrice’s new way of holding aloof from the rest of us,” she complained. “I wonder if she can have got it into her head that we do not make enough fuss about Gregory, or any nonsense of that kind. Some girls think their brothers ought to be first in everything, and I remember once that Beatrice had fancied we were not as considerate as we might be about your father; she is a girl who flies off at a tangent once she takes up a fancy; and how is she to know anything of the ways of business men? I daresay she does not know a single other man in business among all her acquaintance. I am sure I am sorry that Gregory should have to work as he does; it seems hard upon him, with his expectations, and an only son, too,—I told your father long ago he ought to put his only son into the Guards, or something; but he turned round on me so sharply that I have never said a word of the kind again. We ought to be thankful for what we have, Wynn timer,” leaning back in her easy cushions with a sigh of content. “Of course, if your father had not worked and slaved as he did, we should never have been where we are; and we ought to have sense enough to see that Gregory must do the same. We can’t let Mark Lane go.” She wound up, with a perception of saying something profound and sensible.



“Mark Lane keeps us in Berkeley Square,” started Mrs. Pomfret afresh, presently. “So that, though I should have liked, as I daresay we all should, to have had a gay young spark in uniform come cantering about the house, still, as soon as I saw it had got to be, I just saw it had *got* to be, and there was an end of it.” And again she heaved a comfortable sigh.

“Oh, of course,” said Wynn timer, indifferently.

Wynn timer had long ago accepted the position: indeed she had never indulged in the vision of a dashing young brother bringing *prestige* to the house, as her mother and sister had done, for the very good reason that, being possessed of much of the shrewd business faculty of her father, she had early perceived that if the money so freely spent in one part of London did not continue to be made in the other, the fountain would soon run dry; which state of things would not have suited her at all. It had, indeed, been Winifred who had suggested Gregory’s recall, even before the medical fiat had gone forth as regarded his father.

“Why should not Gregory take your place?” she had been the first to demand, when sitting round in gloomy conclave, various propositions had been made and rejected.

Mr. Pomfret had proposed to retire, to retrench, to do all kinds of things indeed, which had sounded



like so many knells of doom in the ears of his listeners. He had himself been so thoroughly frightened and shaken that he had been ready for anything, and had, so his family told him, been unable to judge about anything. It might be all very well for him not to care about giving up the house in town, cutting down the establishment, and knocking off all unnecessary expenses; the brunt of the blow would fall on them, on his wife and daughters, who were *not* ill, and did still care to go into the world and be of it.

Then Winifred had made her suggestion about Gregory, and Mr. Pomfret had only wondered he had never thought of it before. When the idea had been for the second time laid before him, that by the lips of medical authority, the finger of Providence had been plainly seen in the arrangement.

Straightway he had set the machinery in motion, and all had gone well from the Mark Lane point of view.

But Wynn timer had no less in her heart deliberately sacrificed her brother according to her notions of sacrifice. She had relegated him at once to the *rôle* played by her father, and had indeed in her quieter way been more cruel than Caroline.

Once or twice when Caroline would have had Gregory included in some scheme or project, Wynn timer had coldly seen no reason for doing so. She was not



proud of her brother ; she would have let him alone.

“So you think Beatrice does it out of mere opposition?” she now observed, after a pause. “If so, she will soon tire of her *protégé*.”

“I can’t but think she does. It isn’t as if she were younger, or he were older,—” and Mrs. Pomfret paused. “Of course, if there had been anything of *that*,” she began again, but here even Wynn timer looked amused.

“Oh, if there had been anything of *that*,” echoed she, “we might let them ride together morning, noon, and night. Dear me, I wish—but it is no use wishing. Of course Beatrice thinks of him as the merest infant in arms as compared with her, and he is one single year younger——”

“And what is a year?”

“A year makes all the difference at twenty-one. Gregory is just twenty-one and Beatrice is twenty-two. Look at Beatrice! I am sure she looks as old as Caroline, or I; she has been about so much, and she had her own money so early——”

“Yes, her own money. Her own money would have been very comfortable,” murmured Mrs. Pomfret, who, like many a rich man’s wife, never thought she could have enough. “And just think what a thing it would be for you girls, and for us all! Those proud relations of hers could never go on holding us



at arm's length as they do, if anything of that kind were to come off. We should get to know everyone of them. We should be invited——”

“You need not trouble yourself to enumerate the houses to which we should be invited,” observed Winifred coolly. “As they say on the hunting-field, ‘a sheet might cover them.’ Even if a marriage by any desperate chance did ever come to pass between Gregory and Beatrice—but the idea is absurd; you must see it is absurd. Neither of them would be fools enough to think of such a thing for a single moment.”

“Yet somehow they are always together,” said Mrs. Pomfret.

“In some instances the more people are together the further they are apart. Do you suppose that Beatrice—Beatrice who is the proudest of the proud—would ever behave as she does were it not that no thought of Gregory has ever crossed her mind? If such a thought were once to do so,” and she paused.

“Well?” inquired her mother, anxiously.

“We should see the last of her in Berkeley Square, that's all,” said Winifred. “If you want to retain your smart young lady visitor under your roof, mamma, you can't do better than go on leaving Gregory to be petted by her, and you can't do worse than giving the slightest signs of a hope that the petting may lead to something more,”



## CHAPTER XI.

“HOW BLIND BEATRICE MUST HAVE BEEN.”

GREGORY POMFRET had now found something to live for, and the entire absence of any such object hitherto, served to intensify and emphasize every altered emotion.

He had, it is true, punctually discharged his duties in the counting-house ; more, he had found considerable interest and satisfaction in doing so ; as a business man he was, so far, a success, and knew he was a success ; and we should be wrong to give our readers the impression that he never had a bright moment. His father's increased confidence and approval was in itself a source of quiet gratification ; the pleasure of achievement was another pleasure ; and, added to these, the young man could not but feel that in Mark Lane he was a popular and prospectively important personage.

Therefore in Mark Lane he was tolerably content and cheerful ; it was the dreary vacuum which followed each busy day, the dulness of coming home to a grand, neglectful mansion which cared nothing



about his comings and goings, and in whose daily routine he had no part nor lot, which was fast taking the bright hues out of every outlook, and shutting in every prospect as by a leaden sky.

If this were the "London season," and this the "living at home" which his parents had simultaneously vaunted as one of the advantages of Gregory's lot as compared with that of others of his age and standing, how would it be when the next few months were over? Where was he to go? What was he to do?

He had supposed he should have to go into lodgings, and he had had no objection at all to the idea; indeed he had soon come to perceive that he would have done better to have carried it into effect at the start,—but his father had been antagonistic, had suggested this and that objection—the principal one being that on the days when he did not himself go to the city he should not hear what had gone on there unless Gregory could bring a report—and it had seemed only reasonable that such an objection should have its weight.

But he had come to wish that he had combated it, presently. With a friend of his own age, in small, cosy rooms, with servants who would not look askance on him, and a cook who would at least consider him, he would have been better off.



And yet, yet when it came to thinking of moving into these same ideal rooms during the hot, close months of August and September, and dwelling on and on in them through the fogs of the autumn and the snows of winter, he had a little shrunk from the idea. He had become, as we have said, habituated to his stagnant existence, and it was rapidly extinguishing even the desire for a remedy.

Then Beatrice had stepped upon the scene, and all had become changed.

The homeward journey, which had been wont to seem an amusing part of the day, had become on a sudden interminable in its length, and intolerable in its delays. He could not now fret his heart out on an omnibus, dragging its slow length along,—he must needs take a hansom, and tell the man to drive quickly. If by chance he had not the proper fare handy, he could by no means wait to get change from the lazy footman whom he should have had to summon, but must give the driver something, anything, to appease his rapacity, and send him out of sight in haste.

He would feel a shy, unacknowledged desire to get near a mirror. His heart would thump when it came to opening the door of the boudoir.

For Beatrice would be usually, almost invariably, within. Beatrice, with her bright smile and disen-



gaged air, would look up on his approach, and greet him as though his coming were an event,—not merely as though he had drifted in from the next apartment.

Formerly if any females had chanced to be still about when Gregory came home, they would either have friends with them with whom they were in the full tide of chat, and to whom he would be accorded only the slightest possible introduction—supposing an introduction to be inevitable—or they would be pursuing some interesting topic among themselves, to which, after the briefest of salutations, they would instantly revert; and he would scarcely gain a hearing if he asked, as now and then he did ask, what was going on among them?

They never inquired into what was going on with him. Occasionally one or other would ask if he had met a visitor on the stairs, or in the hall; or he would be told that Winifred or Linny had met an old college friend who had asked after him, or that a relation was married, or dead.

But relations cannot always be marrying and dying, and poor Gregory's stock of news had fallen sadly low; indeed he was at a low ebb in every way when Beatrice Andover first crossed his path.

But now? Now, a fig for news, for sisters, for visitors, for everything! All he wanted was to



behold the one graceful figure reposing in the easy chair, whose very look said "Come to me," on his entrance, and to whom he accordingly went, straight as an arrow.

This was what would follow :

"A little earlier than usual to-day, Gregory. Not so busy?"

"Oh, pretty busy, but—I managed it. And then I got home quickly."

"No stoppages?"

"No. That is—" and here a guilty blush would insert itself, for he would fancy himself betrayed by the acknowledgment—"that is, I took a hansom. I could not wait for an omnibus."

"I daresay. It must have been hot in the city to-day; and, after all, you are not a poor man. I suppose you might afford yourself a hansom every day if you chose."

"Oh, yes; but it's waste, you know. At least," and here the blush again," at least it is *sometimes* waste. Of course, if one is in a hurry to get home—but I—that is, an omnibus is amusing, you see, in its way. I like to watch the people; and it rather freshens you up going on the top."

"I wish I could go on the top."

Gregory laughed. "Well, I don't know," he said. "It would hardly do for *you*, although of course very



nice people do go; all sorts of people; and some of them look quite ladies, too;—but still,—oh *you* couldn't do it, Beatrice."

How blind Beatrice must have been!

Gregory might indeed have said the same words to his mother and sisters, and would very likely have done so; he did not fancy knock-about women of the take-care-of-myself order,—but there was certainly an inflection in his present tone which would hardly have been there had he been addressing any other companion.

"Well, and has that ship been heard of yet?" inquired his cousin, next. She possessed the charming art of never forgetting what a bygone conversation had been about—supposing it to have been about anything in particular; and of pursuing the topic, as though it had had a place in her thoughts, in the meantime.

On the previous evening, Gregory had been full of a ship which had been delayed; had, with some circumlocution, confided these details, which had been received by Beatrice with profound interest,—but his agreeable task over, he had not, it must be confessed, given any very special thought to the matter. The ship had only been a very little overdue, and no fears for her safety had, so far, been entertained.

He was, however, gratified that Beatrice should have



remembered the affair. He was enamoured of everything she did or said.

“And how about a walk, instead of a ride, this evening,” pursued she, next. “I have a slight headache, and have begged off going with your mother to a concert, and I am afraid I do not feel quite equal to a ride either, Gregory. But Linny says she will come for a walk—”

“Linny?” Gregory’s face fell.

“Oh, perhaps you would rather stop at home?” rejoined Miss Andover immediately. Really and truly she did not understand the sudden cloud.

To stop at home, however, was not to be thought of. He was longing for the air, for movement,—for anything in her society, it is true,—but for some vent to restless, feverish happiness more than all besides. The walk accordingly was agreed upon, and, as the guest walked between the brother and sister, the former had nothing in reason to complain of.

He had nothing to complain of—but he had much to dream upon. He had a step, a voice, a question, a jest, a laugh; he had a touch of the hand, a glance of the eye; best of all, he had a token, a gift.

In passing a branch of sweetbriar whose sprawling arm threw itself with negligent impertinence in the way of the walkers along the sweet-scented “Flower Walk” of Kensington Gardens, Beatrice had broken



off the point of the spray, and after inhaling its aromatic fragrance herself, had passed it on.

Gregory's face on receiving it at her hands might have made her start.

She, however had seen nothing, and he had joyfully concealed his treasure ; thinking as he did so that at last—at last—but we will not pry into his thoughts.



## CHAPTER XII.

“PLAYING THE SPY, DID YOU SAY?”

“IT seems to me that these sort of walks had better be nipped in the bud,” observed Miss Caroline Pomfret, on the following evening, when alone with her mother and sister. “It is all very well to say that Gregory is a boy, and that Beatrice is a woman, but boys of twenty are at the age of all ages for philandering, and for philandering too after girls older than themselves. If Beatrice were like anyone else I should give her a hint; but she is so stately and absurd with us all, that——” and she shrugged her shoulders, as though to shake off the burden of an unpleasant idea.

Mrs. Pomfret saw the matter in another light. “Upon my word, I should not wonder if you were right,” she said. “Upon my word, I begin to think that among us we have done Gregory scant justice. It was your father’s doing to begin with. He was forever bidding me let the boy alone; he was frightened to death lest we should entice him away from



his work, if once he began to go about with us, to get into our set,—so that I really cannot blame myself for doing as I was bid, for your father was not to be crossed, and the business is important, as we all know. Still,—” and she looked around for suggestions.

“What makes Linny think there is anything between them?” demanded Winifred, abruptly.

“I never said I thought there was anything—I never did think it,” replied her sister, “but Beatrice is making a fool of the boy, that’s all.”

“If she is doing that,” and Gregory’s mother began to redden,—but she was interrupted by Caroline.

“Oh, it is not intentionally, I assure you, that is the most provoking part of the whole. If there were anything one could take hold of,—but there really is nothing. It is simply that Beatrice is so possessed by the notion that Gregory is a poor, ill-used creature whom it is a charity to befriend, that she has worked herself up into the Quixotic vein over him. She began at me the other day, about his ‘leading such a solitary life,’ and the ‘change it must be for him after Eton and Oxford——’ ”

“Why did you not tell her what papa said?” cried Wynn timer, almost fiercely. “Papa was most particular that we should not tempt Gregory to



neglect his work. Don't you remember how he spoke about it when Gregory first came home? He said it would be of no use his coming home at all, if he were to do all mamma was planning for him to do. Mamma had fully meant him to go about with us."

"Indeed I had," chimed in her mother, "and if Beatrice says that I had not, she is a wicked girl. I would have been glad enough to have had the poor fellow with us."

"We should all have been glad enough to have had him with *us*," observed Linny shrewdly, "but his having us with *him* is *une autre chose* altogether; I fancy from what Beatrice said," she added, reluctantly, "that she thinks we might have given up some of our engagements and amusements, when we found he would not be able to share them——"

"Oh, nonsense!" burst from both her mother and sister.

"I don't see it in that light, you may be sure," the speaker darted on each a look of impatience, "I am only repeating what Beatrice said—or as good as said."

"I never heard such utter—what could she have been thinking of?" cried Winifred angrily. "To want to tie down a whole family to one boy's apron strings! To expect that papa, and mamma, and we—who are ever so much older than Gregory besides—



are all to be at his beck and call, and alter our whole way of life because of *him*! Beatrice ought to be ashamed of talking such ridiculous stuff. But I suppose she is one of those women who think that everything and everybody ought to give way to the men."

"Yes, that's it," assented Caroline. "I believe that really is it, Wynn timer. Her whole tone meant that. We ought to 'consider' him more,—to 'give up' for him a little,—and all that. Well, all I can say is, if one person goes on 'considering' and 'giving up' as she has been doing lately, she will land us all in a pretty mess. The fact is that Beatrice is looking on the matter from one point of view, and Gregory from another; and between them—" and again she shrugged her shoulders with significant emphasis.

She was perfectly in the right. Gregory was treading on a quicksand. A flash of new life ran through his veins; a sense of expectancy, of joyful anxiety, and throbbing impatience made the hours burn that had before seemed so cold and dead.

They were instinct now with fire.

When by the side of his beautiful cousin, however, it would seem as though a cool hand were being laid upon his fevered brow. He could talk and jest; he was almost calm, while the tumult raged within.

Once she showed him her photograph. He did



not ask for it. That was his greatest triumph.

And somehow a feeling which she could not define at the moment, just prevented Beatrice from offering the gift she had pre-determined upon making. Perhaps it was the expression on the young man's face. Perhaps she recognized all at once that he *was* a young man. Perhaps the entire absence of comment with which he put away the portrait from him when he could no longer venture to retain it, may have been another note of warning. At all events, there was a momentary awkward silence, and Gregory thought he had acted his part as became him, and drew a long breath of relief and self-congratulation. Then he began quietly to talk to his cousin about other things, and succeeded in surprising her anew. Surely she had been mistaken in the dim suspicion which had troubled her a few minutes before. Such mistakes are easily made. People fancy they read all kinds of humors depicted in each other's countenances, when a tithe of those humors are in their own fancy.

Only too willing now to acknowledge herself misled, Beatrice entered into the dialogue suggested by Gregory's opening remarks with spirit, and nothing further happened to excite uneasiness.

Caroline, however, detected her brother leaning over the photograph presently. Fast locked in bliss-



ful reverie, he did not perceive her approach; and she had leisure to peruse his features ere he became aware of another presence than his own.

A slight rustle, however, on her part, and the large panel portrait fell from his hand.

“ Oh, you need not do that,” observed she, with a steady gaze which took in his start, his frown, his bite of the lip, and understood them all. “ There is no need to spoil a pretty picture, because you are caught looking at it. Beatrice would allow you to look at it, I am sure—what? She would not? My dear Gregory, you are too modest. Not even look? Oh, yes, ‘you may look, but you mustn’t touch—’ ” affectedly warbling the appropriate notes—“ remember that, dear Gregory—you mustn’t touch——”

“ Hold your tongue!” The words sounded like a low growl of thunder. “ What did you mean by coming upon me like that?” he continued. “ It was a beastly mean trick. You know I hate being startled, and you tried to startle me.”

“ And apparently succeeded.” The tone of polite mockery stung him, as it was meant to do.

“ Of course, you succeeded. Anyone can succeed in playing the spy. You——” but here he reined himself up.

“ Playing the spy, did you say?” said Caroline, slowly. “ The spy? Now, I wonder what there



could be to play the spy about? People who are merely looking at other people's photographs surely need not mind being spied upon, even supposing—"

A muttered oath escaped Gregory.

"Good Heavens! Oh, Gregory! Oh, my dear Gregory! Oh, you naughty boy! You funny boy!—"

It was too much. He could have struck her, such was the passion that boiled within. As it was, had he turned his face to view, even Caroline Pomfret must have quailed beneath the livid rage depicted there; but, afraid of himself, he gathered his shoulders together and turned away, so that she could only see the back of his head.

"La! what big ears you have, Gregory!" she cried, laughing.

The last lingering spark of sympathy between the two died out when those words were uttered.



## CHAPTER XIII.

“IT IS NOT THAT I AM THINKING OF AT ALL.”

THENCEFORTH Gregory durst not so much as ask where Beatrice was, nor what she had been about, nor indeed mention her name, when Caroline was present.

His sister had divined his secret, and had made sport of it.

It was bad enough that she should have penetrated into the recesses of his breast, carefully concealed as he had deemed his treasure there, but he could have endured that, had any reticence or reverence been shown.

Once or twice he had fancied that Linny had looked at him curiously of late, and had half expected her to say something, perhaps to charge him with something; in the event of which he had been ready either for evasion, or confidence, as the nature of the case had demanded.

He had almost felt as if he would have liked thus to have been taxed. It would have been strangely delightful to have had to acknowledge the wonderful



truth; to have seen how his sister took it; and to have been thus perhaps given some dim idea as to how another person might—might—some day—take it.

Had Caroline laid a soft touch upon his arm, and whispered a kind word in his ear, on the occasion of finding him with the portrait of Beatrice in his possession, she would have heard all; as it was, the only syllables that were not frozen on his lips were those of a man outraged in his tenderest point.

And the last insult (in the present excited state of his being he termed it “insult,”) sent—we must confess it—the tears to his eyes. He had rather weak eyes at the time—he was weak altogether. Every mole-hill was a mountain.

“I think I woke him up a little,” communed Caroline with herself, “I think I gave him a hint he will remember. Why, dear me, that moon-struck face of his would have betrayed him to anyone; so he may thank his stars it was only to me, as it happened, who knew all about it before. The stupid, tiresome fellow. Now, if he goes and lets out any of this, it will undo all the good he has done; and instead of staying on, she will simply flee the scene, and never come near us again. I was bound to muzzle him, if it were only to make sure of Beatrice for the 28th.”



Beatrice had already extended her visit a week beyond the term originally fixed.

Ostensibly she had done so to please her elder relations, Mr. and Mrs. Pomfret, and to accompany their daughters to some July garden-parties. The garden-parties of July had set in with considerable severity; and Miss Andover, since she had to go with the Pomfrets somewhere, preferred them to other forms of entertainment. Accordingly she had suffered herself on these grounds to be persuaded, but everyone knew that her real reason was Gregory.

She had been able to effect some sort of reformation in the household as regarded Gregory.

Her persistent recognition of him as a personage, entitled to a voice in family matters, to a hearing in family projects, to consultation, to participation, to everything in short as to which a son and brother of the house might justly lay claim, had been first successful with Mr. Pomfret, next with his wife, and lastly—and we fear for selfish reasons only—with Winifred and Caroline.

“We must humor her,” they had agreed, “it would never do to seem ill-natured;” but, all the same, we know the light in which they looked upon their cousin’s championship.

Mr. Pomfret, however, had been heartily pleased. All along he had been infinitely less to blame than



the rest ; his mind had simply been imbued with a leading idea, which had taken possession of it to the exclusion of every other. That his son should be a thorough "business man," that his heart should be in his work, that he should seek neither recreation nor rest till he had well-nigh worn himself out, as the parent himself had done, seemed in his eyes the one thing to be desired as regarded Gregory. As all his doubts and cares and fears had been steadily set in that direction, he had had no eyes for any other contingency.

"Stick to it, my boy ; stick to it ;" had been his one word of encouragement, of approbation, and of warning.

He was now well satisfied with the result. Gregory had "stuck to it" as manfully as heart of man could have desired, had lived for the life he led, as completely as though no other existed ;—and what though his quiet face grew paler, and duller, and thinner as the weeks passed on ?

But Beatrice Andover's short, curt, almost contemptuous epithets had made poor Mr. Pomfret's breath come and go.

"What ? — what ? — what ? —" he had cried,—  
"What ?—my dear Beatrice—I—upon my word, I hope you are mistaken. Gregory is doing excellently, admirably. We are making a first-rate business



man of him. He will tell you himself that he is the right man in the right place; and let *me* tell you, my dear young lady, that the right place is not always to be found for the right man in these days. Gregory may think himself a lucky fellow, to step into his father's shoes, as young as he is. Most sons are double his age before they have his position. He will be a rich man before he is thirty. He——”

“It is not that I am thinking of at all,” Beatrice had made answer briefly.

But she had found it difficult to expound her views. It had seemed so odd, and unnatural, and impertinent, when she came to face them, that they should be such as to make her seem better and wiser than everybody else. She had been able to drop a word, or fire a glance, when Gregory's name was mentioned, or omitted, with excellent effect; she had found no difficulty in shaping her own days so that he should benefit thereby—but she had failed when endeavoring to put into decent language her opinion of the manner in which he was treated by the household generally.

Nevertheless, Gregory had been the better for the interview.

Whispers of it had run up and down the house: the very servants had winked to each other, and some of the better-hearted ones had on the instant



turned upon the others, and declared that for their parts they had always said it was a sin and a shame to leave the poor young man so much alone, and that no good would come of all that running after this thing and that, forever and ever, and never using the big drawing-room, unless it were for company.

The big drawing-room was, however, to be used upon the 28th of the month, on which occasion Mrs. Pomfret was to have a dinner-party, regarding which she and her daughters had a very special anxiety.

A peep into the boudoir a few days before the expected festivity will explain to what this referred.

"Whether it is off, or whether it is on," said Winifred, decidedly, "there is no doubt about one thing, Major Heath is coming on the 28th, and if Beatrice is not grateful to us, we cannot help it. He simply made us ask him."

"She is very huffy on the subject, all the same," observed Mrs. Pomfret, shaking her head. "When I did but ask her whether she would choose to have him to dinner or not, she would hardly answer me, and looked live coals."

"Does she think we know anything?" said Caroline.

"Oh 'know anything'! How should we know anything? It was by the merest chance I heard; and if she goes at me, I shall say that Lady Fanny,



for all she's Lady Fanny, is the last person in the world for truth,—and of course, we might have thought that if Beatrice, stopping as she is in the house, had not wished to have any friend of hers invited, she would have said so without a scruple. Oh, I'm all prepared if anything goes wrong; my only fear," with a sudden hesitation, "the only thing now upon my mind, is—Gregory."

"Gregory?" ejaculated both her daughters.

"What will he say to it all?" demanded Mrs. Pomfret, slowly nodding from one to the other. "You know what you both think. Now if another admirer appears in the field!"

"Another admirer!" echoed Caroline, scornfully. "Poor Gregory would indeed be flattered of he knew he and Major Heath were being classed together as co-admirers of the beautiful Miss Andover. Why, don't you know, mamma, that Major Heath is the handsomest man in London at the present moment? That he is the most run-after, most sought-after, most galloped after man of the day? That his going out of town, going off no one knew where, at the very beginning of the season, was an affliction little less than the absence of royalty itself would have been? That when his coach was no longer at the Four-in-Hand meet, and——"

"Oh, for goodness sake, stop, will you?" inter-



rupted her mother, peevishly. "What has all this to do with it? What does it matter where whose coach was no longer?" her grammar giving way in one long rent. "All I care about is, are we to let Gregory in to the dinner, or not?"

"Let him in?" Again Linny echoed the words with her noisy laugh. "Cart-ropes would not keep him out. If we can conjointly keep him in order during the meal that will be as much as we can do. He won't like it, I can tell you."

"It will do him good," said Winifred bluntly.

"So much good that I am in hopes of a perfect cure," assented her sister, "that was one reason—though of course only one reason—for my getting mamma to ask Major Heath. If Beatrice is only reasonably civil to Major Heath—I suppose he is to take her in?"—she broke off interrogatively.

"Of course," replied her mother.

"Well, if she is only fairly agreeable and loquacious, and if he is as much smitten as people say he is, poor Gregory will be in a bad way. He will see such a magnificent man, and will hear that he is so tremendously run after, will be so taken aback, and overcrowded altogether, that I—I don't think I shall catch him fondling Beatrice's photograph again in a hurry."

"But still you say there is nothing decided between this Heath man and Beatrice?" inquired her



mother. "Certainly, it would be odd that we should never have heard of it, if there had been. And she has not the air of an engaged girl. Nor yet of a jilted girl. She has a word for everybody; and the only time I have ever seen her show temper, has been when she thought we were neglectful of Gregory. To be sure she does not seem over well-pleased that we should have asked Major Heath; but as Wynn timer says, how could we help it? I am sure I for one, never knew how it was done. I scarcely knew that I had a place vacant for the 28th, till I found myself being thanked for my 'kind invitation.' But when I told Beatrice she colored all over, and gave me such a look!"

"She does not like her smart men to find her here, I suppose," said Wynn timer, with a frown. "I suspect that Beatrice has a great deal more of that sort of thing in her than we used to think. Did you notice that Major Heath spoke of having known her at her aunt, Lady Fordsham's, and at some other big house of the same kind? Evidently, Beatrice had never told him about us, or that she was stopping with us, or anything; and I should say he was overjoyed to come wherever she was, and ask no questions. If he does think we are not in his or her regular set, he seems too sensible a man to mind that. I am very glad mamma asked him; he will look simply splendid



in our rooms, and Mrs. Walmer, who thought so much of having lanky Captain Dixon at *her* dinner, will wonder who in the world we have got at *ours*?"

"Yes, I hope he will come rather late," observed Linny.

"Late? It would be much better if he came early."

"Oh, no. Coming in late, everybody would see him."

"If he comes early, they will not only see him but look at him."

"Provided he stands on the rug. But he won't stand on the rug; he will get into a corner, or behind the folding-doors, or somewhere out of sight. Oh, he had much better come late."

"As if we could not prevent his getting into corners in our own drawing-room, at our own party!" cried her sister. "I will engage to hold him in hand, and plant him well in view, if he comes early."

"No one will hear his name if he comes early."

"His name is no particular name."

"Oh, yes, it is; a major is always a major; and Major Heath sounds well, besides having a sort of familiar sound. I am sure I have often heard of Major Heath."

"Who is Major Heath," said a new voice in the



doorway, whose tone of inquiry almost made the speakers start.

Somehow they had not meant to tell Gregory anything about Major Heath.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## A JULY DINNER PARTY.

THE evening of the 28th proved to be one of those exquisite nights of ripe July when every living thing and inanimate object alike seems to have arrived at maturity ; when there is no longer anything new to be expected from Nature ; when every nest is hatched and every bud has burst ; and the longest day is over ; and one and all draw a breath and pause ; hovering upon the summit towards which so many lines have converged.

To such a night a certain sadness of the soul is a not infrequent accompaniment.

Prosaic people aver that the July atmosphere, being charged with electricity, is apt to produce an uneasy effect upon the nervous temperament ; and that the languor, and lassitude, which overcome even robust constitutions at such a time, are due to this perfectly natural and explicable cause,—but, apart from this, there is, methinks, a sympathetic subjugation of the spirit, a drowsy heaviness of the limbs, when the



youth and buoyancy of spring is over, and nature is replete and still.

Gregory Pomfret did not understand this, and wondered why he did not feel happier and merrier, as the summer night drew on.

Nothing had gone wrong with him throughout the day. He had even had rather a good day. One or two things had pleased him in Mark Lane. He had heard news which he knew would gratify his father. He had found out that a matter which had troubled him was not of the importance he had thought it to be. A missing letter had been found. And he had not left early, being content to wait and perform his part of the day's work faithfully to the last, the while he had told himself that his reward was at hand.

Yet, now, at home, and preparing for the festivity, he seemed like one in a dream. He could not get up any interest in the affair. It had interested him greatly when first he had heard of it. He had insisted on seeing every answer, and on hearing every detail. He had been quite satisfied upon being told that he was to hand in to dinner a harmless little girl of nineteen, one of the "nice girls" with whom he was always well content; and to have an equally harmless elder lady on his other side. He had never expected to sit by Beatrice.

Beatrice was to be given to a Major Heath? All



right. Majors as a rule were old-fogeyes; nobody ever thought of a Major as anything but a Major; he supposed his mother had picked up a half-pay veteran somewhere or other, and had owed him a dinner. He had not heard who else was to sit beside his cousin, but he had furtively stolen into the dining-room and inspected the table arrangements for himself, and had still found nothing at which to cavil.

A respectable member of Parliament had been relegated to the seat on Miss Andover's left hand, and his own place was directly opposite.

Directly opposite. He had felt himself quite in luck.

For a few moments the effect had been such as to galvanize every limb into activity, and he had shot upstairs to make ready, feeling excited and inspirited.

But dressing took him some time: the evening was hot; he did not like his appearance in the mirror; and the gardenia which he had bought in the city began to turn brown at the edges.

Even when he was all ready, instead of descending to the drawing-room, he sat down in a chair.

After all, what was there to anticipate in the hours before him? Why had he fancied he was to derive pleasure from them? If Beatrice were not to be near him, not to be speaking to him, what good did it do that he might just sit and look at her? He had not



had her company on the previous evening, either. She had had to go out somewhere; and for two consecutive mornings, although she had been down at breakfast, she had come in so late that he had to be off almost immediately after she had appeared.

He had asked about riding, and had been told that the weather was too warm for riding. Beatrice had spoken gently, as she always did speak to him,—but she had not proposed any other arrangement. He had felt a little shock at the moment, the sort of cold touch that we all know, when the tremulous expectation of our hearts meets with no response,—but the feeling had passed, and he had told himself that it never ought to have been there.

Be miserable for *that*? For what? Because perchance, a feeling had arisen—and oh, joy if it had arisen!—that enough had been done on the one hand, and that maidenly reticence and maidenly modesty now demanded that all further advances should be made by the other?

Was it possible—barely, tremblingly possible—that his cousin had said as much to her own heart?

Beatrice was one year older than himself.

A year—what was a year?

She had begun by looking upon him in the light of a boy, and he had not been deceived by the frankness of her speech, by her open interest in his affairs, and



by her general partisanship ;—but, supposing she had come to perceive that she had been mistaken in thus regarding a man of twenty-one, and that this little rebuff had been the first-fruits of that discovery? If it had, should he not be a fool indeed to cavil at such first-fruits?

Thus he now strove to argue out, point by point, and every argument proved the weight upon his spirits to be a foolish, causeless weight. Why, then, could he not shake it off? He did not know.

In the drawing-room, however, all was presently gayety and brightness.

For a wonder, people arrived punctually, and arrived in their proper order. Mrs. Pomfret had precisely the required minute or two between each announcement, which enables a hostess to arrange her guests and effect introductions. Without effort couples were joined together, and appeared to take kindly to each other. All went serenely on, and if any one suspected the presence of one of those deep under-currents which so often underlie the smooth surface of passing events, no notice at any rate was taken.

Caroline came up to her brother and laid her hand upon his arm. “Don’t forget you are to take in Florence Airlie,” she murmured. “The Airlies are here now; I saw their carriage arrive when I was in



the window. And your places are near the middle of the table."

"All right," said he, indifferently.

"Exactly opposite Beatrice," pursued his sister, and departed.

Exactly opposite Beatrice? Gregory smiled to himself. Then he glanced at Beatrice. Her face was turned from him, but he could perceive that she was conversing easily with a quiet-looking man of no particularly distinctive appearance, and told himself that he had nothing to fear from Major Heath.

It was as he had thought; his mother had provided an unexceptionable, uninteresting individual for her young guest; and, whilst approving her discretion, he could not help secretly rather wondering at it.

With the family desire to make the most of Miss Andover, it did seem a little strange that they could not have produced a partner more suitable, on the one occasion of their entertaining during her visit.

But even as this reflection rose in his mind the door was thrown open for the final arrival, and the unexpected words, "Major Heath," fell upon his ear like a pistol shot.

His face changed. The room seemed to spin round with him.



## CHAPTER XV.

MISS AIRLIE FINDS GREGORY POMFRET THE BEST  
FUN GOING.

CAROLINE POMFRET had told her mother that Major Heath was the handsomest man in London,—but we all know that there are many such men, or, to be more explicit, many men of whom the same thing is said. Given a certain height, and certain features, and a certain status, almost anyone, certainly almost any bachelor in society is eligible for the title,—and accordingly it need not surprise our readers to hear that they have probably each and all met with many an one possessed of quite as good a claim to be considered an Apollo Belvidere as the guest who now entered Mrs. Pomfret's drawing-room.

Charley Heath, as his intimates—and a good many who were not his intimates—styled him, was certainly a fine-looking fellow, with a soldierly bearing, and the air of a man of the world,—but it was poor Gregory's jealous eyes which invested him with such



a halo of danger as made everything else forgotten, the moment he appeared.

On a sudden the poor boy felt as though he had been fooled—swindled—made the victim of a vile conspiracy. Why had he merely been told the stranger's name? Why had no one so much as dropped a hint of the kind of personage Major Heath was to prove?

Major Heath was to have Beatrice, and—yes—he was speaking to Beatrice now. It appeared as if he knew her. They met as friends. He saw their hands touch each other; noted the few words exchanged; observed the lady resume the seat from which she had half risen, and turn again to her former companion.

He drew a breath of relief. If this were not a first encounter, if Beatrice had been already seen, and known—he looked almost happy again, recollecting that he had never once heard his cousin mention Major Heath's name.

“How charming these roses are! I am so fond of roses!” It was his own lady who was speaking, and, truth to tell, Florence Airlie was saying to herself at the moment that she would rather have had anyone else in the room for a companion than the stupid son of the house, who, even when he had begun to speak, seemed to forget what he had had to say. For



Gregory had begun a sentence and had left it unfinished when Major Heath appeared in the doorway.

He did not even hear, now that he was being addressed.

Such inattention however, was not to be borne. Florence told herself that as she had got to have this dolt of a Gregory, she must make the best of him, and at all events appear to be getting on all right, and duly impressing the partner who had been selected for her.

“The worst of roses is they do drop their leaves so in hot weather,” she now proceeded. “It is of no use trying to wear them; you simply scatter your rose-leaves in everyone’s path,” and she smiled and waited for the inevitable compliment.

Gregory however, was in no mood to strew sweetness in anyone’s path. He murmured a senseless rejoinder with his eyes still fastened upon the distant sofa.

“Do you know what they say of Major Heath?” pursued Florence.

“What?” The word came back like a cannon shot.

“What is coming now?” thought he. He fixed a burning gaze upon his informant’s face.

“Oh, nothing, or rather only a little thing,” and Miss Airlie laughed affectedly. “Nothing to make



you turn on me like that, I assure you. Is Major Heath a friend of yours?"

"What do they say of him?"

"Nothing bad, at any rate."

"But what?"

"Have you not heard it?"

He perceived he was being tormented, and that silence was his best refuge.

"Ah, well, I am thankful to see you have some curiosity, I assure you," pursued the persevering young lady, still struggling with her destiny, "so now that I have roused your curiosity, I shall proceed to raise your jealousy. Well, they say—of—Major Heath"—aloud. The door opened and dinner was announced. "That he is the handsomest man in London," concluded the speaker, triumphing in her climax.

But her triumph was of short duration.

"Is *that* all?" said Gregory, with a contempt which was obviously sincere. "I thought,—I supposed it was something very different; something much more interesting. Oh, he is the handsomest man in London, I daresay," with a little snort. "I am sure he may be so for me. Men don't think much of looks. I had thought,—I had hoped," he paused.

"What?"



“That you had something really to tell. Something particular—some story—or—news—”

“Story? News?” Miss Airlie stared. “Did you mean that he was engaged to be married?” she demanded, after taking a step or two down the stairs.

This was precisely what he had meant, what he had longed to hear, and what would have set his mind at rest for the remainder of the evening.

But the idea was a new one to his partner. She was not in the set which claimed Major Heath as its own, and knew but little about him. She had merely meant to be smart and amusing, and to see whether she could not run up a little bantering skirmish on the subject, which would at least show her to be a girl who would talk and make a man talk, not a simple schoolroom miss who was content to gape at the show and take no part in it.

It flashed upon her now, however, that she had once heard a rumor, vague and shadowy indeed, but still a rumor of some kind, about a love affair in which this very Major Heath had figured. For worlds she could not recollect what the affair was, nor how it had ended; but, quick as thought, she resolved it should serve her purpose at this pinch; and accordingly, “Oh, you are so dreadfully clever,” she simpered, “Now, what am I to say? If you *will* guess, you know—but I don’t fancy it is given out



yet, and at any rate, I have no business to tell tales. Pray remember, Mr. Pomfret, when you are officially informed of the fact, that you had never heard a word of it from me."

"All right," said Gregory, with a bright look, "oh of course. I ought not to have put my finger on the spot, ought I?" He was now in spirits to go on talking. "Only when a person says to you, have you heard about anyone? it is the first idea that comes into your head. I only fluked it, I do assure you. Here are our places," leading her briskly round. "Right opposite them—the window, I mean, catching himself up. "What a jolly night it is! I am so glad we have all the windows open. It would never do if my mother had not had her boxes well filled though. People would see in. This house is lower than the rest; I mean the dining-room floor is. But we are all right behind the window-boxes." His tone was pitched for continuance, when all at once the stream of talk ran dry. Beatrice and Major Heath were taking their places.

They had entered the room before Gregory and his partner, but had perambulated all around the long table in quest of their allotted seats, and had only just found them. They were making the usual trivial remarks, and wore the careless, disengaged air of people occupied merely with the scene before them.



“How charming your cousin looks!”

It was Miss Airlie's good-natured way to think and to say that people looked charming. “We all admire her so much,” she proceeded. “We think her quite lovely; she has such lovely eyes and mouth, and such a heavenly smile.”

No answer. She thought Gregory was not listening.

“A new dress too, I should say; and the very color for her. She can wear pink and not look pale. Those pink flowers in her hair——”

He stole a glance.

“I wonder what they are,” proceeded the chatterer. “They set off her dark hair, don't you think? We fair people fancy ourselves in pink, but I daresay it is a mistake. I wish I had worn blue. Miss Andover in pink kills me in pink; whereas in blue,” and she waited to be told what would have happened to her in blue.

“In blue you would have killed everybody,” rejoined Gregory, gallantly rising to the occasion, “but blue is the color for blondes, is it not? I am sure I used always to hear that blond and blue went together.”

(“'Pon my word he is waking up,” thought Florence.)



“Oxford blue, I suppose you mean, sir?” said she, saucily.

“No, Eton,” retorted Gregory with equal spirit. “I am an Eton as well as an Oxford man, Miss Airlie.”

(“He is really waking up,” cried she to herself, enchanted.)

After that she had no cause to complain of him.

It was obvious that on the other side of the table conversation flagged, and the longer that the pauses grew betwixt Beatrice and Major Heath, and the more silently he sat, the while she conversed with her neighbor on the other hand, the more vigorously did Gregory and his pretty partner keep up the ball.

Gregory was certain, positive, that Beatrice was out of spirits. True, she looked beautiful, but to him she was always beautiful, while he had never seen her in the pensive vein before. Some cause for that sweet seriousness there must be, and if some cause, what cause?

Once or twice he caught her eye, and fancied she looked furtively, almost anxiously, at him, also that she snatched her glance away directly it was met.

The blood began to dance in his veins.

He talked, jested, rattled, said the silliest things and laughed the silliest laughs.

Happily, however, he neither eat nor drank; had he taken wine, the effect might have been disastrous.



As it was, he was undergoing a species of intoxication. A hope, a joy, a wild dream possessed his soul which had the effect of stunning every other sense.

As for Florence Airlie, she was amazed beyond description. How she had underrated this Pomfret youth! What injustice he had done himself! He was simply the best fun going; and she, who had been chafing against her hard lot in having been doomed to accept him for her dinner-table companion, had been quarrelling with the best piece of bread-and-butter that had been offered her for many a long day.

She was bound now to make up for such a misunderstanding.

"Major Heath is like a fine statue," she whispered. "Good to look at, but not lively on nearer acquaintance. We will suppose his mind is elsewhere," significantly. "He beholds another fair one, fairer even than Miss Andover, and Miss Andover's charms have no power to touch his preoccupied heart. Yet the man might be civil for manner's sake," she added, with a feint of indignation which Gregory found delightfully witty.

He laughed with exquisite enjoyment.

"Just for the look of the thing," he assented. "Just to take his part in what is going on. It is too bad of him to sit like a stone watching us, at



all events. If he cannot talk, he need not listen."

"Listeners never hear any good of themselves neither," cried she. "So, my good air," apostrophizing the unconscious Heath, "if you can hear so far—which I doubt in all this uproar—you might not like it. No, he does not hear us, Mr. Pomfret, he could not look so absolutely unconscious if he did. No, his thoughts are far away—far away," sentimentally, "and——"

"He is speaking to her now, however," said Gregory, suddenly.

All the time he had been chattering gayly he had never withdrawn his entire attention from the one absorbing point of interest. The two quiet figures opposite, so obviously unconcerned about making the hour pass agreeably to each other, were a ravishing vision to his sight. It appeared as though Major Heath and Miss Andover alike actually preferred the society of the person on the other hand when disposed for conversation; and at length it seemed so unnatural that they should address each other at all that it was almost with a start that the watcher opposite exclaimed, referring to Beatrice's partner, "He is speaking to her now."

The curious thing was that Beatrice seemed to start also.

It was, however, but a mere isolated remark which



passed: a word in her ear, no more. It must have been his, Gregory's own, absurdly suspicious fancy which painted her brow and cheek crimson for the next few minutes after it had been spoken.



## CHAPTER XVI.

“COME, THIS LOOKS LIKE BUSINESS.”

“EVEN poor Gregory came out quite wonderfully.”

Mrs. Pomfret was referring to her party of the previous evening, and her air of complacency showed that the subject was a pleasant one.

“And looked well too,” observed Caroline. “For a wonder his tie was respectably tied, and he had some color in his face. But I believe——”

The door opened, and what the young lady believed did not appear, for it was Beatrice Andover who entered, and family topics had a knack of sliding out of sight in her presence.

“What are you going to do to-day, my dear?” Mrs. Pomfret leaned back upon her cushions lazily. “It is going to be a very hot day; indeed it is very hot already, I think. Will you drive with me, or ride with the girls?”

“I will drive with you, thanks; that is,” and the speaker hesitated. “You meant in the morning, did



you not? You meant before luncheon? I fancy it will be the freshest time in the day then, and it is not eleven o'clock yet."

"Shall we say half-past eleven?"

Half-past eleven was agreed upon, and the carriage was ordered.

"And what about the afternoon?" inquired Caroline. "Wynn timer and I thought of looking in upon the Butlers' bazaar, and going to Lady Carey's tea afterwards. What do you think?" addressing her cousin. "Oh, here is Wynn timer," as her sister entered. "Is not that bazaar of the Butlers' to-day, Wynn timer? And the Careys' tea? I forget days of the month, but this is the fourteenth, is it not?"

"Right for once," replied her sister. "As for the bazaar, we had a sort of promise wrung out of us to go to it,—but if Beatrice does not like the idea,—" and she paused for a reply.

"Oh, did you mean me to go?" Beatrice looked from one to the other. "Oh, thank you, but I am afraid I—I can't manage it. I am not very fond of bazaars, and I don't know the Careys. Please do not trouble about me, either of you. You know I can always amuse myself; and this afternoon I—I"—she stopped in some confusion.

The sisters glanced at each other. "Gregory" was written in both their faces.



“It is either that, or that she does not choose to go with us to our places and friends,” said Caroline to herself, “I wish I knew which.”

“I suppose you are going to ride with Gregory?” she laughed lightly. “Now, you dear, good Beatrice, you are really too awfully good to him; I know what you think, that we are a set of selfish creatures, and that——”

“Fie, Linney! For shame! Beatrice, don’t mind her. She is a silly chatterbox,” interposed Mrs. Pomfret, comfortably. “You think nothing of the kind, my dear; *I* know. And I am sure we are all of us grateful to you for being so kind to the poor fellow. For, to be sure, he has but a dull time of it; only, you see, it is his father’s wish. Mr. Pomfret is so dreadfully afraid of pleasure interfering with duty—those are his own words—that he won’t have us think we are to take him about with us, and amuse him, as we used to do. Mr. Pomfret is very particular, when once he has made up his mind. Perhaps you did not quite understand that, my dear?”

“Oh, I think I understand,” but Beatrice hesitated. “It was so natural for me to be the first to notice,” she murmured, “because, of course, outsiders do always see these things first. I mean that they are more likely to be struck by anything unusual.



And Gregory looked so—desolate—” then she broke off short, to the surprise of all, for she suddenly found she could say no more.

She had come to have a curious feeling about Gregory. A sort of creeping fear, which yet had scarce formed itself into a real fear, would now and again make her pause before his name, and hesitate about announcing the little daily sacrifices she had begun by making so frankly in the sight of all.

What if there should be any misinterpretation? Why did her hearers now glance at one another?

An awkward pause ensued. It is not exactly pleasant to be told that your son or your brother, living under your own roof, looks “desolate”; and had it not been for the break in the speaker’s voice, and the mist in her eyes, both Mrs. Pomfret and her daughters would have flushed up at the remark; but as it was, they only, as Beatrice perceived, took mute counsel from each other’s countenances.

“Poor fellow,” murmured the mother, at last. In her heart she was saying, “come, this looks like business, indeed. Perhaps the girls will believe me another time.”

Even Caroline was staggered. “*Can* she be such a fool?” was her internal comment. Winifred alone remained coldly neutral; she would not even commit herself to an opinion in her own mind.



“Sisters grow accustomed to their brothers’ looks,” pursued Beatrice, with an obvious endeavor to treat the subject easily, “you must not think for a moment, dear Wynn timer and Linny, that I imagined—I mean that I blamed—that is to say,” truth and politeness desperately struggling for the mastery, “that it was not perfectly natural——”

“Beatrice, Beatrice, say no more.” Linny had recovered her wits, and resolved upon her line of action. “Beatrice, my dear cousin, do not perjure yourself for such a trifle. Reserve your powers for deeper necessity,” laughing. “We all know exactly how you feel, and what you think, and,” here the speaker looked around, as though to call attention to her forthcoming words, “and I, for one, have come to a resolution on the point. I am about to reform,” with mock solemnity. “I will take up Gregory, when you desert him. I will be to him as a Beatrice. He shall look upon me as he now does upon you. Wynn timer here,” waving her hand in the direction of her sister, Wynn timer disapproves of the arrangement; I can tell it by her grim demeanor. On principle, she avoids Gregory, and maintains that he ought to be avoided. She has papa’s warnings ringing in her ears. But I, my dear cousin, I am converted by you. I will take my young fledgling of a brother under my wing when once you have dropped him;



and when your star has set upon his horizon forever he will find that nevertheless his heavens are not a blank."

Beatrice tried to laugh. It was a failure.

By five o'clock in the afternoon, the Pomfrets' house was nearly always quiet. Shortly before that hour the ladies would have roused themselves from the afternoon siesta, changed their dresses, and sallied forth again, not to re-appear until the sun had declined low in the west; when they would hurry home from divers points of the compass, all more or less late, and more or less put out at being so.

"We never do give ourselves proper time to dress," Linny would now and then exclaim, but no one thought of altering their ways, nevertheless.

Beatrice Andover watching the carriage roll away from the door—the sisters had accepted seats as far as the hall in which the bazaar was being held—drew a breath of relief. She was alone. The house was her own. They were gone, and they would not come back again, till—till what?



## CHAPTER XVII.

## GREGORY BUYS A BOUQUET.

“ALL right, I want to go home early myself,” said Mr. Gregory Pomfret.

A young clerk had asked leave to go off soon, on the plea of illness, and the request had been met by the above.

It struck the recipient as being a somewhat curious rejoinder, for Mr. Gregory did not look in any way unwell or out of sorts. On the contrary, he was bustling along, as though enjoying his work, and life generally; and he had just been heard to issue an order in a loud, brisk tone, which seemed incompatible with so much as a finger-ache.

No sooner had five o'clock struck, nevertheless, than the junior partner of the firm disappeared as though by magic; and a few minutes afterwards might have been seen with his face turned westward behind the swiftly-trotting horse of a hansom, which he had hailed with eager and vociferous demand.



The direction given to the driver was not that of the house in Berkeley Square, however. Gregory had something else to do first.

He had first to go to Covent Garden, and select a bouquet.

He had never bought a bouquet before, and at another time would have found the ordeal of doing so a formidable one.

But what barriers will not love leap?

Here was this youth, who knew not where to go, nor what to say, nor how much to give, nor anything about the purchase, in fact, running straight into the net of the fowler, and caring no whit whether he blundered, or squandered, or what not, so long as he got what he had come for, a bouquet for his Beatrice.

He had asked her on the previous evening why she wore no flowers? Were not flowers being worn? Did she not care to have them.

She had answered jestingly, that none had been given her. She had had her own reasons for thus replying; but naturally these had not been understood by Gregory. He had rejoiced in the hint, and the light syllables had tingled in his ears throughout all the day which followed.

Thus, Covent Garden, before Berkeley Square, presently.

The bouquet was all that he could have desired,



when at length a choice had been made among so many riches: it was fragrant, luscious. (Gregory, it must be confessed, liked luscious scents.) It was perfectly fresh, although it had been in the market since the early morning, and it looked as though it would last well.

He was quite satisfied with his bargain.

The only thing he had now to fear was meeting his father in the neighborhood of St. James', or his mother and sisters elsewhere.

True, he never had met them when returning at this hour; and there seemed every sort of chance that he never would; but—ah!—a familiar vision skimmed past, or he skimmed past it, at the very moment when thus cogitating; and he had scarce time to realize his danger, ere it was over.

“Well missed!” he almost cried aloud. It seemed to him the very best of jokes.

“She was not in it; I am sure she would not be in it,” he went on to himself. “I knew she would stop in for me to-day. She was so awfully kind, and—and friendly last night. It might have been rough on Heath, supposing Heath had cared about it. He owed me one, though, for giving me the fright he did when he first came in. If it had not been for that girl's letting out about his engagement, I should have had a nice time of it. A fellow like that——” but



at this point the hansom stopped, and it behooved its occupant to be on the alert.

Gregory jumped out, glancing swiftly round as he did so, and paid the man over-fare, in order to ensure his speedy departure. Then he pulled out his latch-key, and let himself in, devoutly hoping that no men-servants were about.

A large bouquet is a thing which cannot be hid; and he should have had to brazen it out, whoever he came across,—but he did not wish to come across even a footman.

Fortune favored him; and not a soul was to be seen.

He ran quickly upstairs; and paused outside the large drawing-room door. Should he go in at once? Should he begin with gay unconcern to explain the presence of his floral offering; to make out that his cousin had insinuated neglect; that he had endeavored to atone for a past sin of omission; in fine, to play the part of easy indifference combined with gallantry?

This was the *rôle* he had been preparing for himself in the cab.

It seemed a simple one, and all having, so far, gone well, he thought, he really thought he could carry it through to the end.

But what if he had a smut on his face? or a soiled



collar? He had been driving, and been to the market, and the day was hot; he might have contracted some disfigurement; he would have a look in the glass first,—and he turned away to steal to his room.

A second thought, however, stayed his steps.

What absurdity to be troubled about such a trifle? Had not Beatrice seen him come from the city often enough? Had she ever told him, or looked as if she thought he was “an object?” Was she a woman to turn from a man because of a speck of this, or that?

Moreover, if his cousin were waiting in for him, she might as easily as not have seen him arrive, have heard the hansom draw up, and the front door open, and known it was he, by reason that it had opened without a summons of the bell? In that case, she would wonder what had become of him? Possibly, even, she might feel affronted by his dilatoriness? Might leave the house in the interim?

These reflections swiftly chasing each other through his brain in that momentary pause upon the staircase, he turned, and with quickened breath approached anew the large folding-doors of the drawing-room.

He thought he heard something move below. could it be a servant now ascending? Could it be his father?

Another movement. Without allowing himself



time for further deliberation, he seized the handle of the door.

It moved noiselessly open. Such doors always do move noiselessly. The more ponderous they are, the more lightly do they swing back upon their well-oiled hinges.

Gregory, standing in the archway, beheld a sight which he knew he was never to forget for the remainder of his life. That sight was his beautiful cousin in the embrace of a stranger,—no, it was no stranger, it was Major Charles Heath whose arm encircled the form of Beatrice Andover.

One glance told Gregory all.

He did not move, nor exclaim, nor make a noise of any kind: he simply stood still where he was; his leaden feet cleaving to the ground beneath; his hot hands clutching the sweet-scented bouquet; his eyeballs bursting. For nearly a minute he thus stood: he was unaware of its length.

Then a murmuring sound fell upon his ear, a hand—the hand of Beatrice, was raised and laid upon the other's shoulder, there was the echo of a faint sob,—and the beholder awoke from his trance.

He turned, sought for the door handle, failed to find it, and stumbled.

The next instant he had shut the heavy portal with a bang, and burst away.



The flowers fell at his feet—he seized them somehow—anyhow. He got upstairs somehow—anyhow. He thought he met someone—but was not sure. He fancied a voice called him,—but perhaps none did.

Was it his own room he entered? He supposed it was. Did the worthless blossoms encumber his feet a second time? They seemed to do so.

He was not certain about anything. Nothing was clear.

What was he doing up there? What had he seen? Where had he been?

What was the meaning of it all?



## CHAPTER XVIII.

“YOU WILL INTRODUCE ME TO MAJOR HEATH.”

AT last,—though Gregory never knew what length of time that “at last” bounded,—he was startled by a light tap at the door.

He could not recollect anyone’s ever having tapped at his door before, and even to the bitterness of this bitter hour that trifle could add its sting.

Could they not let him alone for once? Might not he, who was never summoned, never sought after, never needed by anyone, have been left unmolested now? It seemed the least that could have been done for him, and yet here he was being tapped for, as though on purpose to—his eye fell upon the bouquet, now to his view a ghastly object, and he kicked it sullenly under the bed, before he went to the door.

At the door, however, his face changed.

There stood Beatrice, with traces of tears upon her cheeks, but with a radiance on her face, with a tremulous, anxious smile upon her lips—Oh, God!



that smile, more touching now than in all its first eloquence!—and with a hand that sought his own, and held it.

“Gregory,” she whispered.

A groan he could not smother escaped his lips.

“Gregory, may I—will you let me speak?”

He bent his head.

“I have something to say, something to explain,” proceeded Beatrice in the same soft undertone.

“Come outside for a moment, will you, Gregory? I know you will hear me, and will not judge me. I—oh, Gregory, don’t look at me like that,” suddenly aware of more than she had hitherto perceived.

“Oh, what have I done? What is it, Gregory? What? Why—I only meant to tell you about—about myself and Major Heath,—about our—about *us*.—Don’t you understand, Gregory? You came in just now,—I knew it was you when I heard the door shut, and I was so afraid of—of what you would think, that I wanted to rush after you and tell you all,—but Charley,” she stopped to blush, and steal a glance, “he is ‘Charley’ now, don’t you see, Gregory? He—I—we mistook each other once, and people made mischief between us, and told falsehoods, and we both believed them,—at least I don’t think I did, for I always felt it would come right, and would never give up hope; but Charley could not feel it



so—men are different, you know,—and so he went away, and I came here. It was just before I came here that he went away——”

“They said he was engaged” muttered Gregory. He spoke like a man in a dream.

“Oh, no, we were never engaged,” replied his cousin, in some surprise. “Who told you so? I never thought that anyone in this house had heard about it at all. We only understood each other; and—and Charley would have spoken—he tells me now he was on the very point of speaking—when *that* came. It was a shameful report,” indignation rising—“making him out to be a fortune hunter, or something of the kind. Gregory, dear, am I a woman that a man must needs marry for a fortune?” And the violet eyes were lifted to his in added appeal for the inevitable rejoinder.

It was the only flash of coquetry Beatrice had ever shown her mute worshipper.

For reply he looked straight at her and drew a breath. “You are a woman,” he said, “whom any man must needs marry penniless—if he could;” and a sort of shudder accompanied the words.

This was too much. She knew she ought not to have provoked this. Her own happiness should not thus have tripped her up.

A shadow fell between them.



It was broken by the bass voice. "You asked for Major Heath to be invited here last night?" he inquired.

"*I* asked!" exclaimed Beatrice. Then she drew herself up, and regarded him with a look of pride. "No, indeed. Would *I* have asked?"

"There would have been no harm if you had."

"There sir, I differ from you," but in another instant she was all gentleness again.

"Why, Gregory, I thought you knew me better. I thought I might have trusted *you*. And, oh, Gregory dear," and again a hand lay upon his arm, "I have been so uneasy, so anxious—did you not see how uneasy and anxious I was! Often I thought you wondered at it; we were so much together, and seemed to know each other so well. When I heard that your mother had invited Charley, and that Charley had brought the invitation on himself—that was what Wynnie let fall—I scarcely knew how to hide what I felt. Did you not notice us at dinner? We dared not speak to each other at all."

"You did speak," said Gregory, "once."

"Yes, once, and this was what he said. That he was coming to-day, that I must see him. That I 'must' see him. You see he left me no choice," with a glad intonation betokening acknowledgment of welcome authority. "Now, you know all, say



that you—” and she twitched his fingers caressingly, and looked a dozen pleadings in his face.

“Say that I what?” retorted he, with gruff directness.

“That you—you did not think it strange that I—that we—what you saw just now,” murmured Beatrice shamefaced and shy. “*You* know, Gregory.”

Even now she had no idea of the pain she was inflicting.

“Oh, of course”—A short, harsh laugh—“of course, it’s all right, you know. Naturally a fellow is taken aback, not knowing anything. And—and as you say, being such friends, we—but I ought not to say ‘we,’—I am a blundering fool,—I say, Beatrice, this—this—gentleman——”

“Yes? This gentleman?” for he had stopped abruptly.

“Is he still here?” demanded Gregory.

“He is downstairs in the drawing-room. I left him there. He said he would wait. I could not be happy till I had explained to you.”

“Oh!” Then the young man moved a pace forward. “If you please, we will go down to him,” he said, “You will introduce me to Major Heath. As there is no other member of the family at home it devolves on me to congratulate him. I know what I ought to



do, and—and you need not be afraid that I cannot do it.” He pushed past, and began to descend the staircase in front of her.

She had no option left but to follow.

She wondered what was coming.

He had said she need not be afraid, but she was afraid—she was more, she was abashed and alarmed. Check him she durst not. Suggest that there was no occasion for this forthcoming ceremonial? Not she. No power on earth would have stopped him, that she saw. He was beyond argument or control.

Could this be Gregory?

He who was so minutely scrupulous in matters of etiquette, to have thrust her rudely aside on the landing above, and to be now marching on, leaving her to follow after, as best she might? He, who had never uttered an impatient nor an imperative word, to have spoken to her in tones before which she had quailed!

What did he want with Major Heath? And what would Major Heath think of him?

He did not even pause at the drawing-room door. Without looking round, he stalked straight in.

“Major Heath,” said a bold voice, at the sound of which Beatrice started and trembled, “Major Heath, you are going to marry the girl I love, the girl I thought loved me—I give you joy,—I—you——” As



they stared at him, with shocked and terrified eyes, they beheld him reel, totter, rock to and fro for a moment, and then fall straight upon his face, senseless, on the floor.



## CHAPTER XIX.

## MAJOR HEATH'S VERDICT.

AFTER all, what right had the boy to make such an ugly scene? What had Beatrice done that she should be thus put to the blush before her true and rightful lover?

Nothing very bad, surely—only made a mistake—but then it was a mistake which caused a great deal of sorrow, and some heart-burning. Only done what thousands of tender-hearted maidens would have done in her place,—but which nevertheless tender-hearted maidens had better be warned against doing, by her example. It does not answer for beautiful creatures, with brows of pearl and lips of roses, to shed too freely the light of these charms, even when led to do so by the purest compassion, upon mournful, heavy-hearted, isolated youth of the other sex.

Beatrice Andover had no vanity, but she had a good deal of pride. Pride in the case of Gregory Pomfret had whispered, "It is impossible that a strippling like that can misinterpret any of your, a grown



woman's gracious attentions." Pride had moreover urged, "Let your womanly pity have full vent. It is something to be able to sway a household as you are doing, and compel them to amend their misdeeds. You will have accomplished for Gregory more than he will ever divine. You by your unaided prowess have effected what no one else could have even attempted."

She had listened to Pride. Had Vanity spoken, it had been safer to have hearkened.

What was now to be done?

Gregory had fallen with a shock that resounded through the room, and now lay absolutely motionless between the lovers.

"Good Heavens! Help me, Beatrice," said Major Heath, attempting to lift the prostrate figure.

But her help was of no avail.

"We must ring for assistance," said he, instantly. "This is not a mere faint—it is a sort of fit. I have seen them before. Do not be alarmed, dear Beatrice," taking her hand in his, and ringing the bell at the same time. "This poor young fellow has been overworking himself, I should say. See how thin he is. I noticed him last night. He wants care and change; but he will be well looked after. Ah, here is some one," as assistance was quickly rendered.

When Gregory came to himself he was lying on



his own bed, being tended by faces he knew, and soon after by the family physician. He never recollected anything of what had happened after a certain point in the afternoon, while up to that point only vague visions floated before his eyes. He had a dim idea of having gone through some strange, dreadful experience; of having witnessed a hideous sight; of talking with Beatrice outside his own door, and of unavailing efforts to get rid of a large bouquet of hot-house flowers, to which somehow or other he had become attached.

The phantasm of this bouquet troubled him more than anything else. He durst not inquire after it, nor suggest where it might be found. Yet as his brain cleared he was sure it was beneath the bed, and that conviction was terrible to him. On the day upon which he discovered that it was not there—it had been previously removed by a deeply marvelling housemaid,—he was almost happy. He fancied he must have dreamed the whole. He had never brought a bouquet home, had never talked to Beatrice, had never seen her and Major Heath—but here again his mind would begin to wander.

“Did you hear what he said?”

The lovers were alone, and they had been talking of Gregory who was now considered out of danger. It was the first time Beatrice had put this question,



yet it had been never absent from her thoughts. Had Major Heath heard, as she had heard, the shrill syllables which had sent such a stab to her heart, on that memorable occasion? If so, had he regarded them as the mere outcome of a mind overwrought and off its balance, or had he guessed the truth?

He had not told her. He had never reverted to the subject. She was obliged to recur to it of herself.

“Did you hear what he said? I mean *that* day? Charley, you know when. Just before he fell down—when he saw you, and walked up to you—did you hear what he said about—about me?” At the last words she hung her head.

“I heard—yes.”

“And—did you believe?”

“I was bound to believe, Beatrice.”

“You think I have been—” she paused, and with an effort added—“flirting with poor Gregory?”

“I think nothing of the kind.” He looked upon her with a proud, fond gaze.

“What then, Charley?”

“I think, dear, you have been—kind.”

“I meant to be.”

“And you thought you had a mere lad to deal with.”

“I did; indeed I did.”



“And so you smiled upon him.”

“Oh, Charley!”

“And you have no idea what a beautiful smile you have got!”



## CHAPTER XX.

## HER WHITE VEIL CAUGHT IN THE HINGE.

ALL the Pomfret family went to Beatrice Andover's wedding, and there was not a whisper in the household, outwardly at least, that the recent illness of the poor invalid, who was by this time able to be downstairs, and to drive out daily, and was about to start for a year's travel ere he resumed work, had anything whatever to do with that family event.

The two principally concerned maintained silence in perfect unison.

Gregory himself never mentioned the subject. The servants knew nothing beyond having been summoned in haste by Major Heath and Miss Andover, and finding their young master in a fainting fit upon the floor.

This was all that rose to the surface of discretion. Of course curious tongues had striven to elicit more.

"I suppose poor Gregory came in rather *mal à propos*, and found you two having your little explanation?" Caroline had put forth. "Was he muchly



taken aback?" Linny affected such words as "muchly." "Horried at himself? Of course it had nothing whatever to do with that—his fainting, I mean—Dr. Williams says he must have been running down, 'getting himself into condition' for this attack, as he called it, for some time; but, I daresay, the astonishment of finding you and Major Heath in confab—?" and she laughed interrogatively.

"As it happened, I had heard him come in, and went to fetch him," replied Beatrice, as steadily as she could. "I told him about—about us, and he at once asked to go in and congratulate Charley."

"Oh, he did that, did he?"

"Yes."

"It was very unlike him," said Caroline, looking keenly at her cousin. "I wonder what could have made Gregory act so unlike himself. Beatrice," she added, after a moment's pause.

Beatrice, who had turned away, looked around.

"I think I know the truth," said Linny, in rather a low voice, "and—and I wish to say that it was not your fault."

It was now the other's turn to lower her tone.

"You forgive me, then?"

"I forgive you,—that is, there is nothing for which you need to be forgiven. But," said Linny, with a look of disgust, "I cannot forgive him. To make



such an exhibition of himself! To make a scene before Major Heath! To—do you know what the maids took away from his room, when he was delirious?”

“No.”

“A bouquet of orchids. A rare bouquet that must have cost guineas. Beatrice, whom do you think those orchids were for?”

Beatrice was silent.

“You know they were for you, and the whole house knows they were for you. Is that nothing to be ashamed of, vexed about?”

“With me? Yes,” said Beatrice, miserably.

“With *you*? No. With *him*. With his presumption, his impertinent folly——”

“Caroline!”

“I say it is so,” said Caroline, loudly. “Gregory has made fools of us all. Servants will tattle. All that has happened and a great deal that has not happened has got out by this time, you may be very sure, among other servants, and from them, among our friends and acquaintances. It will be said that *we*,”—she stopped and bit her lip.

“Surely no one can accuse you of anything?”

But here Beatrice also came to a sudden halt; she knew that people were already accusing in the very fashion she longed to deprecate.

“Yes, I see that you understand,” said Caroline



bitterly, "and that it is so. Gregory has brought this upon us. Don't you think we feel grateful to him?"

"I think you are very cruel to him," said Beatrice warmly. "I think—oh, had I a brother like that, how differently would I treat him! Had you, Linny, and Wynn timer, been like sisters,—what sisters should be loving, gentle, sympathetic, forbearing towards poor Gregory, he would never have thought of me. He would have been happy and satisfied and boyish. As it was, he was old before his time. He—but there is time yet. Won't you just try? Won't you begin? When he comes back, and takes up his home life again, let it be different from what it has been. You might be so much to him——"

"I can't."

"You do not love him, do not care for him?"

"I cannot forgive him."

"Because of this?"

"Because of everything. Altogether he is out of place among us. He cannot be happy with us. He looks reprovingly at us. He is not one of us."

"Yet you seemed to get on together well enough when I first came. I do not mean that you had much to do with each other, but you seemed to be quite good friends when you did meet."

"When you first came? Yes. But since then



Gregory has changed altogether. Formerly he used to hold his tongue if he did not agree with anyone, and at least refrain from being disagreeable. Now he sets forth his opinions: he 'thinks' this, and is 'sure' of that. He thinks we ought to 'live more at home,' to 'hang more together,' to do some good in the world,' to 'try to make each other and all sorts of other people happy' —oh you should have heard him sometimes when you were not by. And of course we all knew what it meant. You don't suppose we are going to stand any more of that? To be lectured by *Gregory!* "

What more could be said?

"I have not only done him harm in himself, but I have injured him with all the rest," quoth Bearice sorrowfully to herself. "Oh, why could I not have let this poor Gregory alone?"

The wedding day was bright with sunshine. A gay and brilliant assemblage gathered to see the marriage rites performed: the organ pealed a joyous strain as the bridegroom led forth his bride, and a murmur of admiration ran through the thronging crowd outside, at sight of the handsome pair.

"A bonnier couple ne'er were tied together!" quoth one old dame with a northern accent. She was startled by a long drawn breath, a bursting sigh, close behind her.



In the rabble of the street—in the hot, dusty sunlight—in, rough loose clothes—with his pale face strained and drawn—with his sunken eyes dilated—stood one whom Beatrice Heath would scarcely have cared to see there.

Happily for her she did not perceive him.

She passed; he almost touched her; the carriage door shut; he fell back among the gazers;—it was all over.

Not quite, however.

The bride leaned forward; her white veil had caught in the hinge of the door.

Striving to disentangle it, she turned round her beautiful face, and through the open window Gregory saw her smile. It was that smile which caused the smothered sob to burst from between his quivering lips.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## CONCLUSION.

SEVEN years now passed away.

How much may happen in seven years !

People marry, die, disappear, reappear, are rich, poor, happy, miserable, and happy again, have time to be everything and to do anything in seven years.

The teetotum of fate can have a right merry spin, and bring out all the figures wrong side upmost ere the seventh year closes.

And thus with the *dramatis personæ* of our little story. Scarce any of them came out of that whirligig exactly as they went in. It wrought changes—some greater, some lesser, but changes still—on all. It left its special mark upon Gregory Pomfret.

It was a bright April evening, exactly such another April evening as that on which we first beheld Gregory, that we are now to have another peep of him ere we say “farewell.”



He was expected to dine with some friends,—he and someone else, who was his inseparable companion during the hours not devoted to Mark Lane. For Gregory still went as of old, morning by morning to Mark Lane, (indeed he had very good reasons for going, for he was now head of the firm, and a highly important and influential personage)—and he still found his way westward, back to his old home, duly every afternoon.

The home, moreover, was still the old house in Berkeley Square ; but though the same, in so far as bricks and mortar were concerned, it was no longer the cheerless, forbidding mansion, through whose portals he had been wont to glide uncared for, and unheeded by all seven years before.

Now—but Gregory will tell what takes place now, for himself.

“There they are ;” exclaimed a childish voice, belonging to a small creature who was peeping through the stone pillars of a London balcony. “There they are, and what pretty horses ! Oh, and what a pretty lady ! Oh, mamma, may we see the pretty lady !” running inside.

Inside the host and hostess awaited their guests.

“How do you feel, Beatrice ?” whispered Colonel Charles Heath, with a little smile, confidential and significant.



“ I wish it were over,” whispered she, back.

“ The children say she is pretty. Did you not say she was pretty, Molly ? ” turning to the little one. But the door opened, and Molly had no need to answer.

It opened to admit a lovely girl in all the bloom of twenty summers, with a fair, open countenance, beaming eyes, and lips that parted ere they spoke.

She looked too happy to be shy, too confident of affection and welcome to be timid.

“ Oh, how glad I am,” cried Beatrice Heath to herself, with a great rebound of joy and relief at the sight.

She had heard of Gregory’s marriage, and report had spoken of a charming bride ; but in these matters there is no satisfying a woman till she has seen for herself.

Now it needed but a glance—nay, two glances, one at the bright young wife herself, and another at the husband who proudly stood by her side—to set at rest every misgiving.

Who was this before her ? This straight, stalwart, upright figure, broad-shouldered, deep-chested ? She called to mind the Gregory of old. Yes, of course, he had always been fairly tall, and by no means insignificant in person,—but he had been so thin, so poor looking, so meagre—if such a term may be used



—that he had lost all the value of his height and breadth.

Then he had held himself badly, had never seemed sure of his footing, invariably had looked as though he had no business to be where he was.

Now he carried his head high, and faced the world without a tremor. His features, although not strictly speaking, handsomely shaped and regular, had improved. It suited him to look older, stiffer in mould; to be no longer smooth-cheeked and apt to blush.

“He has a fine, serious face; he has color, expression, intelligence; he is a man any woman might be proud of,” inwardly cried Beatrice again, and again she added, “Oh, how glad I am!”

At last the havoc she had wrought was repaired; at last she could think of poor Gregory Pomfret without a twinge at her heart. He was well, prosperous, happy. He was master in his own house. The death of his father, and the residence abroad of the other members of his family had been no loss to him.

He had the world at his feet, and something better than anything the world could give, beside his hearth.

“We are to be alone,” said Colonel Heath, presently. “Beatrice told you so, I hope? Yes, she did? We agreed that we would not have any



strangers present at this first meeting. By-and-by we shall send you cards for something more formidable. Do you like society, Mrs. Pomfret?" giving her his arm, as dinner was announced.

"Oh, yes." A bright, cheerful response; an "Oh, yes" that came readily, as though acquiescence were familiar to the rosy lips.

"And your husband likes it too?"

"Oh, yes. Why, of course, if *he* did not, *I* should not," simply, as though stating a mere fact. "But we both like home better, you know," added the speaker, with a confident assurance of sympathy.

"She'll do," said he to himself.

Presently Beatrice and her former lover found themselves alone upon the balcony.

Colonel Heath had taken Mrs. Pomfret off to see some curiosities. The children had gone to bed.

Twilight reigned outside; indeed it was nearly dark in spite of a young moon overhead, and had the night not been so warm and balmy every one ought to have been within doors.

As it was, Beatrice made a move, but, rather to her surprise, her companion laid a detaining hand upon her arm.

"May we stay out here just for a few minutes?" said he. "There is something I want to say to you, Beatrice; and it is easier here, in the dusk—do you



remember our talks in the dusk on the balcony in Berkeley Square ? ”

“ Yes.” She could think of nothing to say but “ yes.” Beatrice was not a quick woman, and to confess the truth, her heart was beating a little uneasily under this turn of events. She rather wished her husband had not carried off the bride. She had not meant to be left alone with the bridegroom. If so left there might arise an awkwardness which neither would know how to bridge over. And now here was the person whom she had fancied would as carefully avoid a solitude *a deux* as herself, absolutely invoking it!

She wondered what was coming.

“ How kind, how good you were to me,” pursued Gregory, in a musing tone, as she re-seated herself, and he stood by, leaning against a pillar, and looking down upon her. “ I repaid you badly ; but—no, it was not my fault. I could not have helped it—no man could have helped it. I was dazzled, blinded. And it was no wonder—who would not have been ? But this is not what I wanted to say, my dear cousin,” turning towards her more briskly, “ I did not detain you to listen to any apologies for the past, but to tell you a little about the present,—to tell you something that I know you will care to hear. My wife,” he paused, and his face



glowed at the words. "My wife—" he repeated, and for a moment could proceed no further.

"Yes, your wife," repeated Beatrice, joyously. "how delightful it sounds! Your wife! And I can see all that she is, all that she must be to you; one has but to look at her dear face—and Gregory, how lovely it is!—to know that she is good. How beautiful her expression—her sweet voice—oh, Gregory, I am so pleased, so rejoiced,—I am ready to listen to anything, Gregory; and only longing to hear. Do go on—what about your wife?"

"She is all, everything that you say," rejoined he, deeply gratified, "she *is* good, she *is* sweet, she is *as* beautiful as she looks. You know what married life may be, Beatrice," he continued earnestly. "I have watched you, though you little thought it, with jealous, unsparing eyes, all through these years that have passed, since last we met; and I have only seen you grow more and more content in your husband's love, more and more satisfied with his companionship, more and more happy in your home. I did not grudge you your happiness,—but I envied it. I would not come to your house, but I stood afar off, and knew and marked all that passed here. Believe me, I was true to you, Beatrice; I tried to take comfort in your prosperity; I would not have lessened it by a hair's-breadth, only—only, I wondered whether any bright-



ness would ever again enter into *my* life—that was all. And now,” a thrill of triumph again ringing through his tone, “now the question has been answered. I, too, have won my prize. When first I knew Grace I said to myself, that for the first time in all these years, I saw someone—do not be angry with me, Beatrice—worthy to be your successor in my heart. You may guess what a thrill of fear shot through me at the thought. I had suffered—” he broke off short.

“Oh, Gregory !” She turned away her head.

“Out of my suffering I had learned so much,” he murmured, “I had learned all that a woman might be, could be, ought to be. You had taught me such lessons——”

“—Oh, *I*, Gregory ?”

“Yes, you, Beatrice, who else? You know how you found me. You know that neither my mother nor sisters—but we will not speak of them. It was to you and to you alone, that I owed it that no senseless, heartless girls of fashion had power to touch my heart, to deceive me to my misery and theirs. My wealth would have been my only attraction in their eyes, but—I suppose it would have been one,” memory evidently at work. “You know I am a rich man. Beatrice ;” proceeded the speaker, after a moment’s pause “and of course the world knows that also. The world always knows such things.



“People who would not have stepped across the street to shake hands with me in my father’s lifetime, when it was hardly known that I existed, certainly not how I might be left under his will, were ready to crowd round me, directly it was found that he had died wealthier than had been expected, and that the firm under my management was more flourishing than it had ever been. There is no false shame about Mark Lane in Berkeley Square nowadays, Beatrice,” joyfully. “Grace drives down to meet me, and trots me home straight from the door sometimes. Almost always she meets me somewhere. She has a nice little pair of ponies and drives herself. And we ride in the evenings in the old way. And she is down at breakfast—I don’t breakfast *quite* so early—but still it is early for a London woman,—but she says she does not mind that—and—and we are both so happy. I could not help wishing to tell you,” he added, with shining eyes. “I owe it all to you. The thought of you——”

“Of me? Oh, Gregory, and I—I have never dared to think of you.”

He looked round, surprised.

“I felt that I had done so much harm. That where I had thought I could do only good, I had done all manner of ill. I had made mischief. I had stirred up strife. I had blundered so stupidly, so



cruelly—it had been nothing but a dreadful, wicked blunder all through,” and Beatrice put up a hand to hide her burning cheek. “You do not know how I hated myself,” she continued. Even now I can scarcely believe that I—that you—that it has not been as I thought. I meant well; I did indeed, Gregory;—indeed—indeed I did mean well,” with increased earnestness, “but no one could say I did not act, or at least seem to act badly. Oh, I could never, never bear to think of it. And yet I know I only meant to do good,” she repeated, and her lip shook.

“Dear cousin,” said Gregory, very softly, “don’t you think that sometimes—perhaps—the good that we try to do and seem to fail in is taken out of our hands, to be done for us by a stronger hand? Done in a different way—by different means,—done perhaps out of sight, and, to our humility, not to be recognized as our handiwork at all? But still it is ours; it begun in us, and through us. Nay, say what you will, Beatrice, and he leaned towards her in the fading light, “Beatrice, your hand opened to me the gates of my present Paradise; those of my wife,” the murmur just reached her ear in the still night air, “shall lead me to the Paradise above.”

THE END.



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